

THE
EXEMPLARY MOTHER:

O R,
L E T T E R S

B E T W E E N

Mrs. VILLARS and her FAMILY.

82.34.4
NEW EDITION.

VOL. II.

L O N D O N:

Printed for T. BECKET, in Pall-Mall, Bookseller
to His Royal Highness the PRINCE of WALES,
and Their Royal Highnesses the PRINCES.

M,DCC,LXXXIV.



E R R A T A.

- Vol. I. page 91 line 17 *for* extirmate, *read* exterminate
 123 — 8 *for* fat, *read* fate
 144 — 15 *for* leter, *read* letter
 169 — 3 *read*, augments
 183 — last, *for* fautless, *read* faultless
 194 — 1 after obedience, *add* and faith
 207 — last but 4, instead of galloping,
 read rapid
 213 — 11 *for* character, *read*, duty

- Vol. II. page 2 line 13, *for* is, *read* was
 10 — 8, *for* attone, *read* atone
 14 — last, after appears, *add*, to be
 48 — 10, *read*, to have waited on
 109 — 12 after These, *add* latter
 163 — 1, *for* confer, *read* prefer
 167 — last but 3, *for* indifferent,
 read, different
 201 — 6, instead of, Would you, *read* to

STATE OF NEW YORK
IN SENATE
January 17, 1894.
REPORT
OF THE
COMMISSIONERS OF THE LAND OFFICE
IN RESPONSE TO A RESOLUTION
PASSED BY THE SENATE
MAY 1, 1893.
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LETTER XLIV.

Mrs. VILLARS to Lady EGERTON.

DEAR MADAM,

I WILL not tell you that I intend to give myself the honour of waiting upon your ladyship ; but with all the confidence of friendship acquaint you I feel very great pleasure in the thoughts of accepting your kind invitation, and that I hope to be in London on the Thursday in next week.

Accept, dear madam, the acknowledgments my gratitude offers to your ladyship. Mr. and Mrs. Stamford share in this sentiment,

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ment, as well as in my affection and heightened esteem, for the parental care you and they have shewn to my daughter. The tenderness of my Flavia's heart tinctured her conduct with imprudence. She gratefully owns her obligations to your family. She condemns her error, and I hope will atone for it by her future conduct. Your ladyship is too well convinced of her regard for you and Mrs. Stamford, to impute her desire of leaving London to a deficiency in the love and gratitude she owes to both. Her ill-requited affection is the motive which prompted the request. She wishes to indulge her grief in solitude; but she must be more disengaged from the object of her tenderness, before she can share the rational pleasures of retirement.

I would not expose my child to the shock of seeing Captain Welmore again. Her reputation might be endangered by an interview;

view; for her discomposure would be remarkable. But as he has left town, I have desired her to visit with your ladyship, and to partake such of the publick amusements as you recommend.

In young minds, love has generally a romantic byass. I hope my Flavia will conquer her propensity to an illaudable constancy; and that her next choice will be founded on esteem, and supported by the merit of its object.

As I shall soon, I hope, exchange this intercourse for a personal conference, I will now only subjoin that I am, with respect and gratitude,

Your ladyship's most obliged

and affectionate

SOPHIA VILLARS.

L E T T E R XLV.

Lady EGERTON to Mrs. VILLARS.

ONE line, my dear Mrs. Villars, to give you some idea of the joy your letter excited. Come, my valuable friend ! Mention nothing of obligations. A visit from you is an inestimable favour. I shall part from your dear Flavia with unwillingness, but *your* determinations must be right. She appears more chearful every day, and never refuses to accompany me on any visit, or to any place of diversion. The sweet girl is paler than when she left you, but I assure you the uneasy state of her mind has occasioned this alteration : for her health was perfectly recovered very soon after the sad accident, and my family is unfashionably regular.--My son and daughter share in my satisfaction, and are as much devoted to you as

Your faithfully affectionate

E. EGERTON.

L E T T E R XLVI.

Mr. VILLARS to Mrs. VILLARS.

I DID not imagine it possible that my affection for my dear mother could admit of any increase, but I find I was mistaken. I have read and examined your letter, and the authors you referred me to, till I hope I am a perfect convert. I now despise that set, whose loquacity withdrew me from truth and peace. Yet I will not attribute less error to myself than I really ought to boast, nor accuse them unjustly. My *conduct* had been faulty before they attempted to pervert my *judgment*. I assure you, madam, I find a real delight in the duties you recommended. I was at chapel one morning last week, when a gay acquaintance went to my room to breakfast with me. I met him coming down stairs, and desir'd him to return. Prithce ! Villars, said he, pulling me by the
B 3 sleeve,

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sleeve, and laughing in my face, hast been at morning prayers? Why, you are quite a reformed man. Egad, said he, you must lay aside this puritanic custom: and indeed you do look asham'd. What have you had a lecture from the dowager in the country?—He saw I was displeased, and turned the conversation. Old square toes, says he, has desir'd an account of the money I brought with me to discharge my bills. 'Tis all gone without any account. How absurd to expect a *gentleman* should give himself the trouble of setting down his expences; besides, it would not do for his inspection. Bills at the tavern, post chaises, white gloves and perfumes, would never answer his expectation. No, no, if he is surprized, that he has no answer, I shall tell him his letter miscarried. When I came first to Oxford, truly he would pay the bills himself, or my tutor should discharge them; but I told him, he shew'd a very mean opinion of an only child, or gave
people

people a bad one of himself, not to let the money pass thro' his son's hands. The good old fellow consented, the money does *pass through* my hands, but not into the hands he design'd.

I was disgusted with Mr. E****'s deceit, and ashamed to have cultivated such an acquaintance. I even ventured to reprove him, tho' perhaps with an ill grace, being conscious I had encouraged in him, and others, a blameable gaiety. Yet in my gayest flights, I never mentioned, nor suffered any one to mention your name without the reverence due to your character. Who can forbear laughing, resum'd Mr. E*****, to hear the harrangues of a beardless philosopher? What! you are too wise I suppose to make mirth of the antiquated appearance, and sage maxims of fourscore, because the old lecturer happens to be a parent. I cannot, answer'd I, find any subject for merriment, even in the circumstances you have mention-

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ed. The infirmities of age (I repeat the words of an honour'd parent) claim my compassion; its unaffected chearfulness and friendly advice, my esteem, gratitude, and love; its piety, my reverence and veneration. There is, I added, a respect due to every parent; but to those who also support the character of the friend, gratitude and love should accompany respect.

Mr. E**** pulled out his watch, put on his hat, set up the corner of it, and throwing himself back in his chair, cross'd his arms on his breast and whistled a tune. Then starting up, I am going to the coffee-house, Viilars, said he, will you go? If I remain here much longer, I shall be absolutely unfit for company. I consented, and we went together. Since this conversation, the gentleman has behaved very differently. He is less familiar and more respectful. The rest of his companions rallied, but soon gave me up as lost to their society,

I find,

I find, madam, it is not only in my power to pursue my own inclinations, but even in some degree to form the manners of those I converse with. They find me resolute in avoiding their profligacy. They cease to consider me as their companion, but they value me as an *acquaintance* and *friend*.—I lately felt a pleasure in the gaiety of these young fellows, which made me desirous of partaking their amusements. I indulged this propensity. I was uneasy when I allowed myself time for consideration; but I wanted resolution to withstand the trial. One laughed at my moderation in entertainments, another at my want of spirit in leaving company before morning, a third rallied my insensibility to the fair sex. In short, they saw me unsettled, and that I was affected by their ridicule. To avoid, I ventur'd to deserve it. Still my principles were not conciliated with my practice. But the sophistical arguments of some pretended reasoners

soners perverted the former. Dissatisfied with myself, when left to my own reflections, I applied to you for advice, yet without the desire of recovering the path from which I had deviated. Happy, if I had been fortified with your precepts, before I had heard the voice of delusion ! But since I can't recal, I will endeavour to atone for the past. I find I have lost no valuable friend, by refusing that moderation my gay associates contemned. My superiors like me the better, for not attempting to vie with them in expence and magnificence. My equals are pleased because I receive them without ceremony, and my inferriors because I treat them with affability. I conform again to the income your goodness allows me, and disclaim the taste of those who profess elegance and Epicurism. I restrain my natural gaiety, till I am sufficiently established to indulge it with propriety,

I have

I have to implore my sister's pardon, for the manner in which I mentioned the mistake in her conduct. I had no right to censure a less culpable action, while I indulged capital errors. But perhaps your prudence concealed my fault. If she knows it, I beg you will be my advocate for her forgiveness.

You may depend on my sincerity in the choice of the sacred order, and on the rectitude of my intentions.

I am, with the most lively sense of your goodness,

Dear and honoured madam,

Your dutiful,

and gratefully affectionate son,

FREDERICK VILLARS.

LETTER XLVII.

Mrs. VILLARS to Mr. VILLARS.

MY DEAR SON,

THE happiness of a parent depends on the conduct of her children. Judge then of mine on the perusal of your letter.

Your

Your sister completes my felicity. She is disengaged from a rash promise by the inconstancy of her lover, and I have reason to believe she will make no future choice without my approbation. She knows nothing of your transient unkindness. I hope you and she will always remember, that both have an equal share in my affection ; and that if it ever be possible for me to love one more than the other, the child who preserves fraternal tenderness, will be entitled to the first place in my heart.

Persevere, my dear son, in the laudable method of which you already experience the happy consequence. Resume that gaiety, which, under proper restrictions, has always rendered you agreeable. The best preservative of chearfulness is a steady adherence to the duties of life. As you have been betrayed into irregularities, you may have contracted debts you are unable to discharge. The power of removing any cause of uneasiness

finess always contributes to my happiness. I enclose an 100*l.* bank note, and intreat you will tell me ingenuously, if this be not sufficient.

I shall set out next week for London with your grandmother, and shall bring your sister back with me. Direct for me at Lady Egerton's. You know, my dear, I always feel a real delight in receiving your letters: A delight, that equals the tender affection which will ever actuate the conduct of

Your happy mother,

SOPHIA VILLARS.

L E T T E R XLVIII.

Lady EGERTON to Mrs. GRIFFIN.

WELL, my dear Mrs. Griffin, I am once more happy in Mrs. Villars's company; my last informed you I expected her; she has been in town ten days. Miss Villars received her affectionate parent with looks of confusion, and shed tears as she embraced

braced Mrs. Villars. The most amiable of women exerted an uncommon degree of cheerfulness to dissipate the gloom that hung on her daughter's brow. Miss Villars, encouraged by such goodness, was enlivened to a gaiety I did not think her capable of. Every day seems to bring with it an increase of serenity, and I believe her heart is entirely freed from its late prepossession. We have been at two private assemblies; and to Greenwich, Hampstead, &c. I have endeavoured to persuade Mrs. Villars to consent to her daughter's continuance in London some time longer; and I'll give you the reason that induced me to make the proposal. Mr. Raymond, the only child of Sir Francis Raymond of Dorsetshire, a man of immense fortune, has seen my lovely charge, and assiduously attended her. He was at both the assemblies, and the partner of Miss Villars. His person is very agreeable, he is polite, and appears possessed of a good understanding.

ing. I rallied Miss Villars on her conquest. Her heart I believe is not interested in his favour, but a little female vanity made her feel pleasure in attracting the observation of a man of Mr. Raymond's importance.

The morning after the last assembly, when the young lady was retired, I entreated Mrs. Villars would permit her Flavia to stay in town, that she might secure the affections of Mr. Raymond, who could raise her to a situation which would properly display her merit. My friend's answer was so unexpected, and so remarkable, that I must impart it.

You are very kind, my dear lady Egerton, said she, in your intentions to promote the interest of my child. This is an additional proof of your love for my family. But be not offended if I dissent from your opinion, and cannot approve her stay in town. You are no stranger to the disposition of Sir Francis Raymond. You have heard that
he

he expects his son should marry some woman of quality, or one who has a very large fortune. Can your ladyship imagine then, that he will overlook our deficiencies in both his requisites? You will say, perhaps, the young people may wait the father's death, or that when Sir Francis finds his son's happiness depends on *his* consent, he will not refuse it. But I will not involve my child in a passion which would again endanger her peace, and even prompt her to wish the death of the only obstacle to her happiness; and I cannot encourage a clandestine address, which would render us unworthy of an alliance with persons of merit. Flavia has a natural softness of disposition, which renders her liable to tender attachments, and to fancy merit where it does not really exist; but I hope her late sufferings and observation will assist her prudence, and preserve her heart, till she can resign it with her esteem. I am
 igno-

ignorant of Mr. Raymond's real character. He has the *forms of politeness*, but he may be very deficient in the *essentials to happiness*. Bred up under restraint; his natural disposition is scarcely discoverable. The advantages of rank and fortune are indeed desirable, as they may diffuse the prevalence of my child's example, and increase her power of communicating happiness; but I would likewise wish her husband to be truly amiable. Mr. Stamford has some acquaintance with Mr. Raymond, and I wish he could casually inform the latter of my daughter's real situation. If the young gentleman makes any proposal to my daughter, or to me, we shall give him a determinate answer. My Flavia will not trifle with his affection.

You find, madam, I take the liberty of disclosing *my* sentiments, though they are contrary to *yours*. I am truly grateful for the motive that influenced you.

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C

I blushed.

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I blushed at my want of judgement, but readily own'd my friend's superiority. How shall I submit to a separation? But she has fixed an early day, and I must not attempt to alter her resolution. The sweet Flavia too! I must lose her. But I lament her departure less than her dear mother's. I might be distressed to know how to act, was Mr. Raymond to address her; I therefore resign her to the guidance of wisdom.

Mrs. Villars passes my door. I attend you, my valuable friend, as soon as I have subscrib'd myself dear Mrs. Griffin's

Ever affectionate

E. EGERTON.

LETTER XLIX.

Mr. SPENCER to Mrs. VILLARS.

I AM inexpressibly concerned, madam, that my duty can't be fulfilled without giving you pain. My pupil's regular behaviour since the receipt of your letters afforded me real joy, and I had no suspicion that he had involved himself in any criminal engagement. Yesterday I observed him in earnest conversation with a young lady in Magdalen walks. I had never before seen him attentive to the fair sex; but the sparkling glances he cast on this lady, convinced me he loved her. I avoided meeting them, that I might continue my remarks. All Mr. Villars's thoughts centered in his companion, to whom I was an entire stranger. Her looks inspired me with admiration, and even tenderness. They were expressive of a soft melancholy.

As I stood gazing on them, another tutor of our college flapt me on the shoulder. What deep problem are you solving ? said he, or are you admiring the magnetic power of beauty upon your young pupil ? This is not your first observation of the affair. Why, man, to my certain knowledge, Villars keeps this girl, and meets her very often at a friend's house,

The information shocked me. How can you, said I, speak so lightly of this affair ? On this young man's proper conduct depends the happiness of a worthy family. He has a mother, the most virtuous and prudent of her sex.—Pho ! replied he, peevishly, *I* am forced to overlook many wildnesses in *my* pupils ; this is a folly that will cure itself.—He then turned away. Mr. Villars and the lady had left the walks, and I returned to college. I did not see him till the afternoon, when I abruptly asked him, who was the lady he was walking with ? His

con-

confusion was evident, and he made no answer. Again I requested to know the foundation of their acquaintance, and hinted my fears. He was still silent. You must pardon me, sir, added I, if I suspect an improper connection, and if I impart my suspicions to Mrs. Villars, unless you remove them, by making me your confidant. After repeated solicitations for his reply, You must do as you please, sir, said he, I have nothing to impart. He then hastily quitted the room.

I leave it to your prudence, madam, to interrogate your son. He loves you tenderly, and has even appeared delighted with a rational scheme of life.

I interest myself in his and your happiness; and am, madam,

Your obedient and faithful

humble servant,

H. SPENCER.

LETTER L.

Mrs. VILLARS to Mr. VILLARS.

YOU will expect a letter from me, my dear son, after Mr. Spencer's information. You probably fear my reproaches, but you have only excited my pity, and occasioned my tears. Must I address my child as the corrupter of innocence? Must I accuse my son of being the cause of a family's misery? Where is the animating principle of christian benevolence? I must become the advocate of an unknown sufferer, and intreat you by every plea religion can urge, to make all the reparation in your power for the injury. Have you deluded her by your vows? Honour requires you to fulfil them. If she made the sacrifice of virtue without any promises from you, yet you shared the crime, instead of being her support in weakness. But you must have contributed to heighten her passion, or she could not surely have been

been guilty of such a deviation. If then you can resolve, in the character of the husband, to atone for the error of the seducer, do not delay an act of justice. Restore peace to an unhappy family, and with the partner of your guilt, endeavour to reconcile yourself to an offended God.

If the young person is unworthy of being your wife, (alas ! why did you then conspire against her return to virtue) do not increase your mutual crime by another interview. If her circumstances be a snare to her, I will enable you to settle something towards her future subsistence. How many young creatures has want betrayed into indiscretion !

Your satisfaction in the performance of the duties I recommended, appeared to me a security for the rectitude of your future conduct. My disappointment affects me more than I can express. Oh ! my child, may a just conviction of your error awaken

remorse, and your penitence produce a steady perseverance !

You refused to gratify Mr. Spencer's friendly curiosity ; but you *must* comply with the intreaties of a tender parent, who, till she is assured of your sincere repentance, must remain,

Your unhappy, yet
affectionate mother,

SOPHIA VILLARS.

P. S. Your sister, who is ignorant of the subject of my letter, sends her love.

LETTER LI.

Mr. VILLARS to Mrs. VILLARS.

WHILE I feel a tender concern for being the occasion of my dear mother's uneasiness, it gives me a delightful emotion to reflect, that I can truly assure her, the young lady's honour is unviolated. You shall be the confidant, dear madam, of my secrets. I have a long story to tell,
and

and such is my inquietude at present, I know not how to tell it.

It is above half a year since I met, on a visit, a young lady, who charmed me by her beauty and accomplishments. I improved the acquaintance. A coquettish turn in Miss Rochford, (that is her name) encouraged my address; till, being assured the conquest was compleated, she treated me with disdain. Miss Leicester (a young lady who visited Miss Rochford) I could observe, disapproved of my fair one's conduct. She even remonstrated on the injustice, and uncertainty of her behaviour. The hints dropt by the little coquette, who despised the reproof, convinced me of Miss Leicester's intended good offices, but I suffered for her interposition. The inexorable beauty triumphed in her power of giving pain, and for some weeks I supported her indignities.

One evening I met her at a private ball; I asked the favour of her hand, but
she

She refused it. No, she had sprained her ankle, and could not dance. Miss Leiceſter was preſent. The haughty looks of my tyrant awakened my reſentment. I begged Miſs Leiceſter would accept me for a partner. She ſeemed ſurprized, but with an air of ſweet complacency mixed with the dancers. Miſs Rochford coloured from vexation, yet drew up her head, and tried to aſſume a ſtately indifference. An officer ſoon after aſking her to dance, ſhe complied without hesitation. Her behaviour was ſo ridiculoſly affected, that I was diſgusted ; and contemned, what before I had almoſt idolized. I compared my amiable partner with this capricious beauty, and the merit of the former was heightened by the contrast. Her features ſcarce leſs regularly charming, were animated by ſuch an expreſſive glow of delicate ſenſibility, as gained univerſal affection, and inſpired with the ſoſteſt regard every diſengaged heart. Even the paſſionate lover of Miſs

Rochford

Rochford had felt a fraternal tenderness for Miss Leicester. This evening released me from my first chains, to rivet me in gentler, yet indissoluble fetters.

Miss Leicester, who saw the affectation of the haughty fair, and imagined I suffered from it, asked me, in a tone of sweetness, if it was in her power to replace me in favour. I could not help telling her, it was in her power to make me happy, but that I disdained a favour from Miss Rochford. She blushed, cast down her eyes, and was silent. I would not attempt any further explanation that night, lest she should consider it only as an effect of disappointed love. Miss Leicester left the company early, and Miss Rochford, fearful I suppose, from my inattention, that she should lose her captive, played off all her attractions. I will confess, that for some moments my heart revolted on the appearance of kindness. She observed it, and believing I was too much her slave to escape
her

her wiles, thought there would be more glory in securing a new conquest, than in exerting her power over the vanquished. One sigh escaped me: I wished she was possessed of Miss Leicester's disposition; but the idea of that lovely person and angelic mind, confirmed my better resolutions. I retired to my room and revolved the behaviour of Miss Rochford, her haughtiness, artifice, and insensibility. The charming Isabella's perfections then arose to my delightful remembrance, and my heart joyfully confessed her superiority.

I waited on Miss Leicester the next morning. She received me with unaffected diffidence. Afraid of being interrupted, I soon imparted my love, the reason of my change, and the esteem on which my present passion was founded. She heard me with pleas'd attention. I enjoyed the soft confusion. It was some time before she spoke. At last,

Your

Your good opinion, sir, said she, is very grateful to a person who always had an high esteem for your merit; but, Mr. Villars, pardon me, if I entertain a doubt of the real alteration ^{or} in your heart. Miss Rochfort has excited your resentment, and you think your love extinguished. The consequence of your mistake may be the destruction of your peace, if I accept the vows you offer. Let me then, sir, be an intercessor with Miss Rochfort, to restore you to favour; or, if she has injured you, permit me to use my endeavours to convince her of her fault. I assure you, it will give me pleasure to contribute to her and your happiness, and I really believe (however love of admiration may have betrayed her into inadvertencies) that Miss Rochfort will condemn, and correct her foibles, if she become a wife to a man of your real merit.

Amiable creature! exclaimed I, how superior are you to that giddy fair one! Be assured

fured the change in my sentiments is the result of mature consideration, and I am more confirmed in my choice by every word you utter.

Miss Leicester then desired that, to secure the happiness of both, she might make some trial of my perseverance. She requested, that I would not visit at the house, nor expect any encouragement from her, till she could depend on the sincerity and constancy of my affection. I promised compliance, but begg'd she would sometimes permit me to see her at a friend's house whom I named, where I would only behave as a common acquaintance. I also intreated, I might be allowed to speak to her when we met in the walks, and that I might then, if unobserved, breathe forth my vows. She blush'd consent. Every interview has increased my love and esteem.

Miss Rochford, to whom I paid a farewell visit, and advis'd a different conduct to future admirers, after unsuccessfully exerting

erting all her arts to recal me, endeavoured to find out her rival. One day last week, she met Miss Leicester at the lady's I have mentioned, and soon after they were seated, I enter'd the room with an acquaintance of the family. Miss Leicester blushed, and the watchful Miss Rochford instantly suspected the truth. I saw she did. Her eyes sparkled with anger. She would not deign to cast a look at me, and behaved with such studied rudeness to Miss Leicester, that I could not help expressing my resentment by a sarcasm on coquetry, affectation, and ill-nature. She was irritated, and darted at me a disdainful glance. She soon after took leave, and as she passed, whisper'd me, loud enough to be heard by Miss Leicester, that she would die to be revenged. My amiable Isabella, as she went down stairs, hinted her fears of Miss Rochford's implacability. I calmed her uneasiness, but found my own almost insupportable.

portable. A day or two after, a gay companion congratulated me upon the happiness of possessing such a woman as Miss Leiceſter. I was ſo ſhocked and confounded, it was ſome time before I could aſk him, who could be the inventor of ſuch a falſehood. He prevaricated a while; but on my inſiſting that he ſhould tell me his informer, or he would incur my ſuſpicions of having forged the ſtory, he confeſſed it came originally from Miſs Rochford, who aſſerted it with the ſtrongeſt aſſeverations. I aſſured him the malice of an incenſed coquette had formed and ſpread this tale. I own'd I loved Miſs Leiceſter, but that ſhe was the moſt perfect pattern of innocence and purity, and had not even given me an aſſurance of the regard I ſolicited. My fellow ſtudent promiſed he would endeavour to refute the ſlander.

I happen'd to meet Miſs Leiceſter that morning in Magdalen walks. A ſettled melancholy ſat upon her ſweet features. I
asked

asked the reason, but she could not tell me. Her voice faltered when she attempted to speak. I guessed she had heard the vile insinuation, and gently mention'd it. Her confusion increas'd, but she express'd no surprize. She own'd this was the cause of her uneasiness. I begg'd she would no longer harbour any doubts of my sincere attachment, and wished she was of age, that we might that moment plight our hearts and hands before the altar.

What! Sir, said she, with a look of delicate concern, would you then have me confirm the unfavourable opinion Miss Rochford has inspir'd the town with by an hasty and a private marriage? and without the approbation of our friends? No, Mr. Villars, consult your mother and my father. If they consent, my heart is firmly your's, and, in proper time, my person shall be so too: if they disapprove, we must never meet again!

Here her fortitude failed. Her tears flowed abundantly. I seized her hand ; Oh ! my Isabella, said I, may I attribute these tears to some tenderness for me ? I can no longer conceal it, answered she. You *are* dear to me : But no more on this subject, till we receive a proper sanction. Farewell !

She then put her handkerchief to her eyes, and waved her hand, as she turned from me. My soul was so agitated with love and resentment, that I scarcely knew which I should first indulge ; but the former prevailed. I went to Mr. Leiceffer's early in the afternoon, and enquired for him ; but was told he had left Oxford that morning with his daughter, and the servant was ignorant where he was gone. I asked at the post-house, and heard he had taken a chaise to Woodstock. I ran back to college, to equip myself for a journey. Mr. Spencer then sent for me. I could not make him my confidant, lest he should prevent my intended pursuit,

suit. The moment I escaped, I mounted a post-horse and almost flew to Woodstock. I could hear nothing of the chaise. I return'd to Oxford, but it was not come back. I set out again the next morning, and came back unsuccessful. I went to the post-master, who told me Mr. Leicester went to ***** where he hired another chaise, and immediately set off again, after giving the Oxford post-boy a bribe to stay out all night, and not to return till the next night. I was now quite at a loss, and my spirits were too much discomposed to write to you. I went to the house of Miss Rochford to demand some information of the consequences of her diabolical influence, but she denied herself. Your letter was brought to me on my return. A gleam of joy darted thro' my soul, on the consciousness that I was not the villain I have been represented. I sat down immediately to answer it; but now all my anxiety returns. What can I do? How shall I re-

cover my lovely Isabella and vindicate her fame?

* * * * *

Oh ! madam, I have received a letter from the dear creature ! Mr. Leicester's servant brought it. I knew her again, and hastily asked from whence it came. She told me the outside cover was directed to her, and that it was Mrs. Griffin's hand, Miss Leicester's aunt. I dismissed the girl with a handsome present, and eagerly opened the letter. These were the contents.

S I R,

IT is impossible to express what I have suffered since I was so precipitately forc'd from Oxford, and it has not been my least motive of uneasiness that you have shared in it. Miss Rochford has been the cause of this hasty procedure. My aunt Griffin, whom you have often heard me mention, and who had been with us about a week before we left

left Oxford, melted by my complaints and intreaties, has at last informed me, that it was Miss Rochford who infused into my father's mind the poison of suspicion. And by such a tale! Good God! how is it possible that human nature can be so depraved, and that a female breast should harbour such destructive passions!

My father's anger was excited almost to madness. He informed my aunt of the shocking story, and concerted with her the means of an immediate separation. In consequence of their scheme, as soon as I returned from you, I was hurried into a post-chaise with my father and aunt, and ignorant of their design, had nothing left but compliance. My father's countenance wore the traces of his discomposure and resentment, and even my aunt spoke to me with harshness. Shocked at this reception, I begg'd to know the reason, but could obtain no other answer than,

Infamous girl!—Vile seducer!—I suspected his meaning, yet could not believe Miss Rochford capable of such wickedness. I attempted to justify myself, but was enjoined silence in a tone that made me tremble. I had heard my father mention Woodstock, but when we were about a mile from Oxford, he gave orders for a contrary road, and satisfied all the post-boy's objection.—We are now in London, at the house of a relation of my late uncle; but my father's design I understand is to fix his residence in town.

O! Sir, he thinks my virtue and reputation lost, and that I should become the prey of some other deluder, if I was to return to Oxford! How shall I reinstate myself in his favour? I have thrown myself at his feet, but in vain. Even my aunt has not yet been a successful advocate, but she does not despair; I have shewed her those copies of your mother's letters, and the poetry, you gave me
leave

leave to take, with which she is charmed, particularly with that letter which affected your conversion. To Mrs. Villars's character I found she was no stranger, having had for many years a correspondence with Lady Egerton, who it seems is an intimate friend of your mother's. Your answer to that letter I imparted, and saw she was pleased with it. She has got all of them for my father's perusal, when she can find a proper opportunity of disclosing them. She thinks you ought to take some method of convincing him of your honourable intentions. My confidence in the sincerity of your affection induces me to be perfectly ingenuous. Indeed this situation requires from you an explicit confession.

My kind aunt will direct and inclose this letter to our servant at Oxford. I thank heaven my innocence is unstained, and your honour inviolate. Delightful reflection! Yet we have been blameable in concealing our regard from those to whom an unreserved ex-

planation was due. But I own I fear'd your inconstancy, and wished to be convinced of your faithful attachment. I have severely suffered for the trial. If you feel for me the love you have professed; if sentiments of generosity still animate your soul; and if you sympathize in the distress you have occasioned, you will not delay removing the uneasiness which now oppresses the heart of

Your sincerely faithful friend,
ISABELLA LEICESTER.

Pray direct to my aunt, at Mr. R---s,
Hatton-Garden.

“ Her heart is oppressed :”—Dearest excellence ! “ If I feel for her the love professed.” Can she doubt it ? “ I have occasioned her uneasiness.” Dreadful reflection ! I, who would lay down my life to promote her tranquillity ! What means shall I pursue ? Oh ! madam, was you with me, your wisdom would direct me ; now I have no adviser !

Hark !—

Hark!—Some impertinent is knocking at my door.

* * * * *

ONCE more madam, I have a prospect of happiness. Mr. Spencer will be my advocate. I might have asked his advice ; but his goodness is greater than I could expect. He came to tell me, he sets out this morning for London, to resign his noble charge Lord M—— to his father. He expects to be in town to-morrow noon. I instantly formed a scheme. I gave him a detail of all I have related, and added an earnest request, that he would plead for me with all the energy of a lover. I told him I was certain of your gratitude for his kind offices. He has undertaken my defence. He is acquainted with Mr. Leicester, and even esteemed by him. He promised to exert all his eloquence, to remove the prejudices of his friend ; and assured me he would impart the result of his intercession the very earliest moment. I had
only

only time to scribble a few lines to my beloved, to renew my vows of constancy ; to express my agonies at her sufferings, and my hopes of an happy event.

Mr. Leicester possesses easy fortunes, which were chiefly acquired in the discharge of his profession, having been an eminent surgeon, but resigned business a few years since on account of ill health. The extravagance of a son, who is lately dead, involved his family in some difficulties, from which he is now extricated by his prudence. Mrs. Leicester died about a year since, and Miss Leicester has been almost a recluse from that time.

I will conclude, and send away this letter to relieve the anxiety you feel, till convinced of my innocence. I shall eagerly expect your forgiveness, and hope for your approbation, to complete my happiness.

I am, dearest and ever honoured madam,
 Your dutiful son,
 and grateful humble servant,
 FREDERICK VILLARS.

LETTER LII.

Mrs. VILLARS to Mr. VILLARS.

THANKS to-heaven my son is innocent of the crime of which he was suspected! I have only to accuse his want of confidence. Why, my dear child, did you not permit your fond mother to realize your hopes and dissipate your fears? She has felt all the solitudes of tenderness, and all the delights of a sentimental passion; a passion confirmed by the conjugal tie, and which flourished even in the decline of youth and bloom. A parent, whose study it has ever been to promote the happiness of her children, might reasonably expect to be consulted in an engagement of so solemn a nature as that of marriage; but Miss Leicester's fears of your inconstancy, whilst they afford an excuse for her concealment of your professions, render your reserve less blameable. Had I been intrusted with your secret, I
should

should have advised you to evince your sincerity, by consulting the preservation of Miss Leicester's peace, which must suffer by a clandestine acquaintance. Your conduct then would have been as meritorious, as the object of your love is deserving. You would have convinced her of the purity, disinterestedness and constancy of your attachment, and even Mr. Leicester must have acknowledged that you deserved his daughter. But whilst I expatiate on the suggestions of duty, I am not insensible to pleas of love. I pity you and the amiable Miss Leicester, and will do every thing in my power to secure your happiness.

How cruel is it to solicit the possession of an heart, and yet to insinuate doubts, which ought to be removed, before such a solicitation can be urged with propriety! If the superiority of fortune is on the man's side, and may be an obstacle to his happiness from the disappro-

disapprobation of parents, it is an insult to offer his vows till he is certain he shall be permitted to fulfil them. I hope, my dear, you have never excited apprehensions in Miss Leicester, that I can refuse compliance with any proposal that seems likely to contribute to your happiness. If I had ever observed in you any particular propensity, with which your present views in life would be inconsistent, I should think it my duty to remonstrate, but never to compel. It is your part to determine. But I know no inclination in you which is not laudable. You are formed to enjoy the highest conjugal felicity. You possess that delicate sensibility, and refined tenderness, of which few of your sex are capable, and which rendered your father truly amiable. May you, in every particular, resemble that excellent original, and your Isabella will be one of the happiest of women. I have no more to wish for in this life than to see you and my Flavia blessing, and making

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king blest, two worthy partners of your hearts.—Write to me, my dear son, as soon as you can convey any further information; and be assured, that only your own impatience can exceed that of

Your ever affectionate mother,
SOPHIA VILLARS.

LETTER LIII.

Mr. VILLARS to Mrs. VILLARS.

Dearest and ever honour'd MADAM.

Thursday.

HAVE you not accused me of ingratitude, when after having received so many favours, I appeared deficient in returning my due acknowledgments? But you will acquit me when you know the reason of my silence. In the utmost eagerness of expectation did I pass the third day after Mr. Spencer's departure. My imagination carried him

him on the evening of the second to Mr. Leicester, when I hoped he would obtain his friendly purpose. That night I expected he would write, but I was disappointed. The fourth day is past.

“ Another and another has succeeded,
“ And each new day more dreadful than the
“ former !”

I am almost distracted with fears, and determine to follow my tutor to-morrow.

* * * * *

Friday morning. I have sent to the office to know my fate.—Ha ! a letter for Mr. Villars ! It is the long-expected epistle. Yet my impatience is suspended by my apprehensions. I have held the letter some moments unopened. My heart throbs, and I feel an universal tremor.

* * * * *

My spirits are revived. I broke the seal hastily, and on a second perusal I think I can perfectly distinguish these lines.

DEAR

DEAR SIR,

I doubt I have occasioned you many anxious fears, and can assure you I have suffered on your account ; but my recital will recompence your uneasiness. I went to the house you directed me to, the day after my arrival. Mr. Leicester was not at home, being gone with his sister and daughter into the country, and was expected to return the next day. I intended to wait on him then, but attending lord M*** to Hampton-court in the morning, with design of returning to dinner in town, his lordship was detained by an attack of a fit. The fifth day after I left you, we came back to London ; but the earl having company, intreated I would sit with his son in his own apartment, not thinking he was sufficiently recovered to be able to mix in a noisy company. Early the next morning I waited on Mr. Leicester, and found him at home ; he expressed much pleasure at seeing me, but
there

there was a visible melancholy impressed upon his countenance. When I opened my design, he shewed the utmost impatience and resentment, but as I proceeded he grew more calm, and at last confessed he had injured his daughter and you.

I have seen some letters, said he, written by Mr. Villars's mother, which are excellent compositions. I also read one of the young man's, which a libertine could hardly be capable of inditing. My suspicions vanished for a time, but returned again on considering, that men frequently assume a mask even of religion to disguise the worst purposes, and that love has tempted many people to commit crimes they would have condemned in another. I own my anger was roused by your interposition; but your management, or the goodness of your cause has overcome me. My dear child! I have been unjust to thee! I acted imprudently in withdrawing thee from Oxford upon mere con-

lecture, and perhaps have hurt thy reputation more than that malicious girl has done.—I long to embrace my Isabella!—

I stopt him till I had prepared the young lady, which I did by Mrs. Griffin's means. She blushed when I approached her, and when I repeated my success, her eyes overflowed. She lifted them to heaven in speechless gratitude. As soon as she was somewhat composed; Am I restored, said she, to my father's love? Have you vindicated my fame, my virtue? Oh! Mr. Spencer, my guardian angel!

She then rushed past me, and running into the dining-room, threw herself at her father's feet, before I could overtake her. My father! my dear dear father! was all she could say. The old gentleman was deeply affected. Tears trickled down his reverend face, he hung over her with looks of love. Never before did I see so moving a scene!

Mrs.

Mrs. Griffin supported her lovely niece, who seemed almost fainting.

Oh! my child, cried the tender parent, forgive my injustice!—Forgive you, sir! answered Miss Leiceſter. Ah! do not entertain the leaſt doubt of my love and veneration. To be reſtored to your affection, is joy inexpressible.—She was unable to add more, and a ſervant entering the room with a letter to her father, ſhe haſtily aroſe, and turned to the window.

Mr. Leiceſter took the letter, and as he read it, Amazing generoſity! ſaid he: Amiable woman!—excellent mother! Theſe exclamations excited Miſs Leiceſter's curioſity, or rather ſeemed intereſting to her heart; ſhe gently ſtepped forwards, her eyes ſparkled through her tears, and her cheeks glowed with pleaſing hope.

Come, my Iſabella, cry'd the fond parent, come and ſhare the admiration and eſteem I feel for the worthy mother of Mr. Villars.

Her son has now a genteel sufficiency, and will have an handsome income when he takes possession of his living. Her generous proposal, if I consent to your marriage, is, that he and you should live with her till Mr. Villars can be inducted into the living. But I will give you some of her own words.

“ My children have a right to every thing
 “ in my power to bestow, and I cannot de-
 “ lay conferring it upon them, till some
 “ remote contingencies take place, when
 “ their merit and the ties of blood have the
 “ earliest claim to my regard ; but as they are
 “ too good to wish I should distress myself to
 “ increase their fortunes, so I must confess
 “ I think it imprudent in any parent to in-
 “ volve herself in a state of dependence on a
 “ child. I shall therefore reserve what I deem
 “ sufficient for my purposes in life, and shall
 “ think it an addition to *my* happiness to be a
 “ constant observer of my *son's*, in that union
 “ which (I know experimentally) is best cal-
 culated

“culated for the enjoyment of the highest
 “temporal felicity. Your daughter, sir, may
 “depend on an equal share of my fond at-
 “tention, with her to whom nature has made
 “me the happy mother; and when an in-
 “crease of income and additional duties call
 “my children to a different place of residence,
 “I shall still have the satisfaction of being
 “near enough to be frequently a personal
 “sharer in their happiness. Mr. Spencer, sir,
 “has given you and Mrs. Griffin such cha-
 “racters, as confirm my approbation of my
 “son’s choice, and I doubt not, the utmost
 “harmony will subsist between us. You and
 “that lady must make my house your coun-
 “try retirement, as I shall always consider
 “your family as part of my own.

“I think your opinion will concur with
 “mine, that it will be most prudent in my son
 “to defer marriage till after he has taken or-
 “ders. This will only occasion a delay of a
 “few months, during which time (as he will

“soon leave Oxford) he can frequently en-
 “joy the conversation of your amiable
 “daughter. Many people are malicious, and
 “an hasty marriage might confirm unfavour-
 “able suspicions; but in this and every other
 “respect, where the happiness of my children
 “is the principal consideration, I only *advise*.”

What an adorable woman! exclaimed
 Mr. Leicester. I have no other objection to
 this marriage than that it will exclude me
 from a nearer alliance to Mrs. Villars. But
 to be serious, I shall glory in being related to
 her, and in marrying my child to a person,
 who I hope inherits her virtues. My Isabella
 will be happy in a mother, and I flatter my-
 self in an husband. You need not doubt it,
 added I; Mr. Villars is all that such a pa-
 rent can desire.—But I will not pain your
 modesty by repeating, what friendship and
 justice prompted me to say.

Miss Leicester, when her father asked if
 she could resign her whole heart to you,
 blushing

blushing confess'd, it had long been your's—I am conscious, sir, said she, that I have transgressed my duty to you, and been guilty of a breach of prudence. Only pardon what has past, and you shall have no future cause to blame me. A fond embrace sealed the forgiveness. Mrs. Griffin, though silent during the melting reconciliation, expressed her satisfaction by the tenderest embraces, and by ym pathetic looks.

A more chearful scene ensued; Mr. Leicester thanked me cordially, asked if I was to inform you of what had passed, and rallied his daughter on the prospect of seeing her lover very soon.—I am delighted in having been an instrument of your and this family's happiness. Miss Leicester is a most amiable young lady; I asked Mr. Leicester, why he had immured her so closely, that I never saw her till by accident in Magdalen walks. He ingenuously told me, that since his wife's death, he had seldom permitted his Isabella
to

to visit or receive company. My acquaintance with him commenced since that time.

When I arose to leave them, Mr. Leicester repeated his thanks. His daughter bowed : I saw the struggle between modesty and gratitude, and was convinced she would have indulged the impulses of the latter, if the consideration of the lover had not rendered her fearful she should infringe the former. Both joined in requesting my visits.

I took up my pen immediately on my return, and truly share the joy I shall excite. If I can be farther serviceable to you, depend on every good office in the power of, dear sir,

Your faithful and affectionate

H. SPENCER.

I am so happy, madam, that I can't find expressions adequate to my meaning. What acknowledgements, what gratitude can equal my obligations to you? I acquiesce in your motives, I joyfully embrace your proposal, and it shall be the study of my life to prove my just sense of your goodness. Mr. Spencer's friendly mediation claims for him a large share of my gratitude and esteem.

I shall ask leave to be absent a few days, and set out to-morrow morning for London. Oh! madam, when I think of seeing my charmer, and of making her mine for ever, with the approbation of all our friends, my heart exults, and I can scarcely restrain my joy within the bounds of moderation!

I hope my sister is acquainted with the state of my affairs. Be so good as to assure her, that no change of circumstances can effect any alteration in my affection for her; and I beg *you* will believe that I shall always cherish those sentiments of reverence,
gratitude

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gratitude and love, with which I now subscribe myself,

Dear and ever honoured madam,

your dutiful son,

and faithful humble servant,

FREDERICK VILLARS.

L E T T E R L I V .

Mr. VILLARS to Mrs. VILLARS.

HONOURED MADAM,

I HAVE seen the amiable creature, and my love is heightened by this last interview. Mr. Leicester and Mrs. Griffin, to sum up their characters, are worthy of being allied to you, and of being father and aunt to my lovely Isabella. I can't give you the particulars of my conference with these relations-elect; I received pardon and approbation, and they conducted me to the dining room, where my charmer was sitting, ignorant of my arrival. They left me at the door,

door, which I gently opened. Miss Leicester was reading, and did not raise her eyes on my entrance; but my impatience discovered me. I flew to her, and, snatching her hand, kissed it eagerly.

Oh! good God, cry'd she, is it possible? Mr. Villars!—I saw the surprize affected her too much, and drawing a chair near her's, gazed on her in silence, till she was more composed. Never did I see her look so beautiful! Her fine eyes shed a milder, tenderer radiance; an air of delicate sensibility took possession of each sweet feature.

Pardon me, dearest Miss Leicester, said I, that I dared to encourage an hope that my presence was necessary to your happiness. It is not vanity, but love, that makes me enjoy this sweet confusion. Ah! my Isabella, what have I suffered? But this meeting pays me for every pang. Have I felt less affliction? (answered she) in the sweetest tone; I cannot think it.—But what a delightful change!

change! resumed I.—Duty authorizes our love, and I have permission to hope the time is not far distant, when I shall have you mine, both by divine and human laws. Will you not ratify the extatic hope?

I have never learnt, said she, blushing, to disguise the sentiments of my heart. Perhaps there was a time when my looks revealed too much, though my lips were silent; but it is not now inconsistent with prudence to avow my affection. Our interviews at Oxford were embittered by the consciousness of a breach of duty. Believe me, Mr. Villars, though I loved you then, and the thought of losing you raised in me an anxious and tender solicitude, yet I never loved you so well as now, when my choice is confirmed by the sanction of duty. I find that without deserv-
ing, it is impossible to be happy.

I applauded her sentiments with such fervor, that her cheeks were overspread with blushes. She has promised to be mine at the
time

time you mentioned. Surely, said she, Mrs. Villars is the most excellent of women? How delightful will it be to observe, and imitate her virtues.—And will it not be delightful, replied I, to share, and contribute to the happiness of a man, who loves you with the most sincere and ardent affection?

“Thro’ youth and age, in love excelling,
“We’ll hand in hand together tread.”

Her looks sweetly indicated the tenderness of her love. We passed two hours in blissful conversation, and I might perhaps have trespassed longer on my friends indulgence, if Miss Leicester had not hinted that we ought to seek her father and aunt, who might think themselves neglected; I acquiesced with reluctance, and we all spent the rest of the evening together.

With what pleasure, madam, shall I introduce to you my Isabella!——Mr. Leicester has hired a small, but neat house, in Red Lion Square. His sister will continue
with

with him ; for having no children, and being lately left a widow, she is desirous of living with her only brother.

I should have called on lady Egerton, but Mrs. Griffin tells me, she went down into Northamptonshire before her own arrival in town ; and that Mrs. Stamford will detain her mother till she has an addition to her family and recovers her health.

I shall leave town again on Tuesday, as I intend to make frequent excursions. I am, ever honoured madam,

Your dutiful and gratefully happy son,

FREDERICK VILLARS.

LETTER LV.

Mrs. VILLARS to Mr. VILLARS.

I CONGRATULATE my dear son on his present happiness, and I enjoy with him his prospect of heightened felicity. Do not suspect, my child, that the caution I shall give you arises from a suspicion of your honour, or a doubt of the proper basis of your love. It is excited by the danger of your situation, and dictated by the anxious tenderness of a fond mother.

The betrothed lover is apt to imagine he has a right to expect from his charmer all the favours which are consistent with modesty; but remember, my child, it is safer to forbear the indulgence of what appears to be innocent, than to hazard the rise of a criminal desire. A man of real goodness will confess that a woman cannot too carefully preserve the strictest delicacy of behaviour to an accepted admirer. The lover views with passion;
others

others may behold the same beauty with indifference. How many women *innocently*, or to give it a more expressive term, *inconsiderately* permit freedoms which occasion an insensible deviation into the paths of vice. We should always consider that those actions which, though innocent in themselves, prevent any duty, or tend to promote any vice, must be blameable, and ought to be avoided.

I hope this amiable family will give me the satisfaction of seeing them in the country some time this summer. I am particularly impatient to see Miss Leicester. She has my love and esteem. Your sister offers her a sincere friendship and sisterly affection.

You will not be able, my son, to live in affluence; but I know you are convinced that great fortunes, any more than great abilities, are not beneficial, except when they are properly used; that we have reason to be satisfied with the portion of each the Almighty dispenser bestows, and that we shall be accountable for the abuse of both.

Happi-

Happiness is to be obtained in all ranks of life, for it certainly does not arise from the increase of our possessions, but from the contraction of our desires ; and from a firm reliance on the wisdom and goodness of Providence, that he cannot but grant us what will constitute our greatest happiness upon the whole of our being.

I have only to subjoin that I hope, love will be so far from diminishing your attention to the duties of life, that it will animate your performance of them. I would have you be ambitious of meriting all the honours the university can confer, or that your situation enables you to receive.

I am, my dear son,

Your truly affectionate mother,
SOPHIA VILLARS.

On *Happiness*. Inclosed in the foregoing.

Not urg'd by flattery's insidious art,
I seek to trace the windings of the heart,

66 THE EXEMPLARY MOTHER.

Maternal love inspires an arduous flame,
Far more impulsive than desire of fame.

Amidst each various state assign'd below,
Ask you from which our choicest blessings flow?

Whether Ambition's sons with soaring eye
The tempting form of Happiness descry?
Or whether in the robes of Pomp array'd,
They barter blifs for an illusive shade?
If Fortune's gems can purchase real joy?
Or whether wealth the sweets of peace destroy?

Weak minds are dazzled with the blaze of state,
And think all blifs compriz'd in being great.
O! power of greatness! honourable sound!
Can Virtue's wreath the brow of Vice surround?
Can Titles any real joy impart,
Expel the head-ach, ease the anxious heart?
Can pomp or riches, make us wise and good?
And is our worth enobled with our blood?
Yet poverty is more contemn'd than vice,
And virtue only honour'd in its rise.

So in a field with flowers enamell'd round,
Tho' each embellishes the mossy ground,
Lost in that humble spot they bloom in vain,
Or only please at best some simple swain;
But if transplanted to a milder sky,
Where gaudy ranges charm the roving eye,
They

They then become the garden's choicest pride,
Admir'd they climb, and deck the verdant side.

.....
Sometimes, but ah ! how seldom is it known,
Bliss shares with royalty the glittering crown.
When virtue settles each supreme decree,
The throne's support is public liberty !

.....
He who with rapture hugs the golden prey,
Thinks it eludes his grasp, and flits away,
Amidst the means of life neglects the end,
By none befriended, and to none a friend !

.....
From the mind's treasure flows our real wealth,
Diffusive virtue is our mental health,

.....
See ! on the rural cot sweet Peace attend,
And gentle dove-ey'd Innocence descend !
Where the unpolish'd mind devoid of art,
Breathes forth the genuine language of the heart.
The husbandman who earns his daily bread,
And by the labour of his hands is fed,
Enjoys more pleasure in his rustic meal
Than pamper'd luxury has pow'r to feel ;
Sweet are his slumbers, undisturb'd his rest,
No fears of future want invade his breast :
But when enfeebled, or by age or pain,
Health, dimpled Goddess, quits the ruddy swain,
Peace spreads her downy wing, deserts her seat,
And meagre Care usurps the calm retreat.

.....

Thus variegated life in every state,
 On Hope's expanded pinion soars elate,
 Then sinks beneath th' oppressive stroke of }
 fate.

In smooth Prosperity's delusive wave,
 How oft enfeebled Virtue finds a grave!
 But when Adversity extends her rod,
 Vice trembling owns the influence of a God.
 Affliction's cloud then weeps itself away, }
The Sun of Righteousness imparts its ray,
 And beams the dawn of Heav'n's eternal }
 day.

.....

Still ask you, is there no peculiar state
 Distinguish'd with the constant smiles of fate?

.....

All earthly joy from *Resignation* springs,
 She cheers the swain and soothes the breasts of
 kings,

Refines the dross of all impure desires,
 And on Devotion's wing to Heav'n aspires;
 There point thy way for bliss without alloy,
 And in that hope the present good enjoy!

L E T T E R LVI.

Lady EGERTON to Mrs. STAMFORD.

ONCE more, my dear daughter, I am arrived at this seat of happiness. What a traveller have I lately been! I had a pleasant journey to town, where I staid only one night. On my arrival here I found my amiable friend happy in an addition of family. Mr. Villars resides now in the country, and Mr. Leicester, his daughter, and my old friend Mrs. Griffin, are come to stay a fortnight. The latter has intirely quitted Northamptonshire. I had never seen Miss Leicester. Her person is tall, graceful, and genteel. Her complexion remarkably fine, is beautifully contrasted by her chestnut hair. Her eyes are a dark brown, and expressive of the sentiments of her heart. Her features are less delicate than Miss Villars's, but equally regular. She has a hand and arm that vies in beauty with Mrs. Villars's: Her disposition

is as amiable as her person is lovely. Miss Villars and she are united in a strict friendship, which the similitude of their tempers must daily encrease.

Mr. Villars's behaviour to Miss Leicester is rational and tender; her's delicate and unaffected. His appearance and conversation are improved by this attachment, tho' he was before so agreeable, I did not believe he could appear more to advantage.

Mr. Leicester is a comely old gentleman. He seems to have a good natural understanding, but a confined knowledge of the world, and literary subjects; having applied, I suppose, chiefly to his profession. He has bad health, being confined frequently by the gout, but his spirits are good. Miss Leicester is the darling of her father and aunt.

Mrs. Villars, Mrs. Griffin, and my dear charge, received me with sincere joy; and the former introduced me to her new friends. What a happy circle! We want only you,

Mr.

Mr. Stamford and your little Matilda; but you are now quite *domesticated*, and too much the mother to become a rambler.

Every one here admires my friend as much as I do; but who that knows her excellencies can refuse the esteem due to such superior merit?

* * * * *

We see by the papers this morning, that Sir Francis Raymond is dead. He expired in a fit of the apoplexy last Monday. His son, now Sir John, has it in his power to shew his regard for Miss Villars. This marriage would compleat my friend's happiness. I hinted to her my hopes. She begged I would not rally her daughter on this occasion, lest I should excite a wish which might render her miserable by its disappointment.

For my own part, said she, I neither indulge hope nor fear. If Sir John really
loves

loves and makes professions to my Flavia, as his character affords a rational expectation of his making her happy, I should then feel the joy with which every parent must be inspired on such a prospect for her child.

Mr. Villars was acquainted with Sir John Raymond at college, and gives him a good character, which is confirmed by Mrs. Griffin, who has a cousin intimate with him. His father's penurious disposition made him soon recall his son from Oxford, where even the *necessary* expences appeared exorbitant, for I never heard that Sir John was addicted to any vice ; indeed you know I enquired into his conduct on observing his attachment to Miss Villars, and every person who mentioned him concurred to strengthen my desire that he should be allied to this family.

My

My love and blessing attend you and Mr. Stamford. Give the dear infant an hundred kisses for me. I am,

My dear child,
your affectionate mother,

E. EGERTON.

LETTER LVII.

Lady EGERTON to Mrs. STAMFORD.

MY DEAR DAUGHTER,

SIR John Raymond arrived here on Wednesday morning. He sat out from town the day after his father's funeral. He asked for Mrs. Villars, and it seems explained himself to her in a very unreserved manner. My friend, who always proves that true politeness is consistent with sincerity, and who is ever attentive to her children's happiness, thanked him for his good opinion of her daughter; and added, that as she was an entire stranger, except to his personal accomplishments,

plishments, it was from the character her son and some other friends had given him, that she would refer him to her daughter. She expressed herself convinced of the sincerity of his love by the generosity of his offers. She hoped, she told him, that he was the worthy object she wished should call her Flavia his, from his honourable and dutiful procedure in the concealment of his love, when it could not have received the approbation of his father. She farther told him, that her daughter's heart was entirely at her own disposal, and that she thought a parent had no right to give any encouragement to a lover of her child, till convinced he was agreeable to that child.

Sir John desired the young lady might suffer no constraint, and begged only for an interview to disclose his passion, which Mrs. Villars promised him after dinner.

On leaving him, Mrs. Villars took the young lady aside, and gave her these particulars

culars. The latter came immediately to me, informed me of the propofal, and of her mother's goodnefs. I faw ſhe had not the inclination for Sir John which had attached her to Captain Welmore; but that the ſmall ſpark of vanity in her compoſition was animated by this proof of her charms.

Mrs. Villars came into the apartment, and after repeating what had paſt, intreated the ſweet girl would conſult her heart, whether it was inclined to favour Sir John. Be not biaſſed, my dear child, continued this excellent parent, by his rank and fortunes; but conſider whether this *man*, without theſe adventitious appendages, would be your choice. If you can feel that preference for him, to which as your huſband he will be entitled, his diſtinguiſhed birth and large eſtate may be allowed to be valuable prerogatives, as they increaſe the influence of example, and enable the good to relieve the affecting diſtreſſes of poverty.

I con-

I confess, to you, madam, answered Miss Villars, that Sir John Raymond has not inspired me with such an affection as I felt for Captain Welmore; but I believe that was really a *romantic* extravagant passion. I esteem Sir John, I even think his person extremely agreeable; nay more, I believe that, independent of his fortune and station in life, I can be happier with him than with any other man I know. If to your unerring judgement, these dispositions appear a proper foundation for happiness, I will give my hand to Sir John.

Mrs. Villars embraced her. It is *your* happiness, my dear, said she, that is the subject of my consideration. Take time to determine, and do not engage your person till you are certain you can bestow your heart.—She then asked, if it was agreeable to us to go down. Miss Villars and I accompanied her. Sir John's behaviour shewed the violence of his love. His assiduities, I believe, really touch'd

touch'd the tender Flavia's heart, for there was a soft complacency in her manner after his declaration of his passion, which I did not observe before. He took leave in the evening, after inviting himself the next morning to breakfast. Accordingly he pass'd the following day with us.

This day he was oblig'd to return to town, but I'll answer for it, his will not be a long absence. Miss Villars actually looks rather melancholy. Sweet girl! Thy susceptible heart is formed to enjoy the highest conjugal happiness, or to endure the severest pangs of matrimonial infelicity! I hope Sir John is of a mild and tender disposition, and entirely free from the vices of the town. Tho' I shall have this dear creature for a neighbour, yet methinks there is something so dove-like, so extremely gentle in Miss Villars, I can't help being fearful, that the loss of her mother's unremitted tenderness will never be compensated by an husband.

As

As I know you interest yourself in the happiness of this most deserving family, I shall write when any thing occurs. Mr. Leicester and the two amiable ladies leave us on Monday; Mr. Villars will attend them to town, and make further enquiries after Sir John.

I am, my dear child,

Your most affectionate mother,

E. EGERTON.

P. S. Mrs. and Miss Villars's respects, and my love and blessing, are always *meant*, though they be not particularly mentioned.

LETTER LVIII.

Lady EGERTON to Mrs. STAMFORD.

MY DEAR DAUGHTER,

I AM afraid my silence has alarm'd you. A violent inflammation in my eyes has prevented me from writing; and though Mrs. Villars was so kind as to offer to be
my

my amanuensis, yet I was apprehensive you would conclude it was some worse complaint if you did not see my own scrawl; I therefore delayed accepting her proposal from day to day, till a fortnight has elapsed. I am now able to scribble a little, and will let you into the state of affairs here.

Mr. Villars's good opinion of his intended brother-in-law, was heightened by the information he received in London. Sir John is generally here. Mrs. Villars proposed deferring his nuptials till the mourning for his father is out, but he says he can't consent to a longer delay than the marriage of Mr. Villars with Miss Leicefter, which will be in less than two months. Mrs. Villars intreats I will be present at this double marriage. I want to go to town, and shall therefore set out next week, and return before the important day.

Lady

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Lady Maynwarding sent a letter by Sir John to Miss Villars. She is the same lively creature as when she left town, but I hope more attentive to her true interest.

I would have persuaded Mrs. and Miss Villars to go back with me and buy cloaths, but the ceremony of dress is to be adjusted after the solemnization of marriage; my friends convinced me such a journey would be inconvenient, and I desisted from further importunity. My next will be from town. Excuse this short letter.

I am, my dear,

Your's affectionately,

E. EGERTON,

L E T T E R LIX.

Lady MAYNWARDING to Miss VILLARS.

PRITHEE, tell me honestly, dear Villars, what you have thought of me? Did you believe I should write, or did you form no expectation from my promise?
To

To be sure I might have found time, and yet I have been most monstrously fatigued with company, shews, &c. But this is foreign from my purpose. I meant to congratulate you on your conquest. I swear, child, sir John is a very pretty fellow; a man of spirit; but don't be alarmed, he has a very good character. I am glad we shall have you in town, though you are rather a dull little toad. You'll chuse some graver companion than I intend to be. My spouse likes my humour; really we are happy, very happy. He is a sweet tempered, considerate soul. I lost a whole pocket full of money the other night, and what does he, but in the genteelest manner present me with a bank note of 100 l. to defray my expences. It has had a good effect. I won't be out-done in generosity; I have absolutely determined, never to play so high again.

Oh! I have a piece of news for my Villars. When I was at Chester, I had the plea-

sure of humbling a country madam, who being raised from the dunghill, and taken to be the consort of a respectable squire, took it into her head to despise all her former acquaintance, and to be intimate with people of fashion: a most ridiculous creature! I was upon a visit where the *musbroom* happened to be engaged, and she entered soon after me most violently be-dizen'd. I was in a slight mourning for an hundreth cousin, and not being perfectly well at the time was quite in an undress. Who could imagine therefore, that under so mean an appearance, so eminent a personage as *my lady* was concealed? Madam glided up the room with an air of self-importance; but seeing her place occupied, she stood aghast like Macbeth on viewing the ghost of Banquo. She viewed me scornfully, and, on the information of my paultry apparel, presented me with a pair of fine broad shoulders, amply overspread with an enormous point lace handkerchief.

I took

I took the tea first without scruple. The lady did not chuse any. An air of gloomy resentment sat upon her brow; and as the person I visited knew the cause of her silence and discontent, she kept up the deception by waving my title when she addressed me.

Sir Richard's entrance concluded the farce. He gave me the appellation to which the plebeian always paid homage. She turned towards me, and displayed a couple of cheeks that outvied the *sunny* side of the catherine pear. Never was pride so compleatly humbled. The alteration in her behaviour was not to her advantage, for she was so meanly attentive to please me that I was heartily sick of her fondness. I could not help reading her a lecture, which, though indirectly addressed, she could not misapply. I believe she will be very cautious how she judges again from appearances, and I hope she is convinced that affability should always accompany superiority of station;

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but I dare not indulge any very sanguine expectations.

Let me know precisely when you enter the holy state of matrimony. You have my best wishes, child. I am giddy, but I have a friendly heart. You must not delay for John's happiness, for he says, he can't support life if you do; not that I altogether believe him, for he does not live wholly upon the thin diet of love. He made considerable devastation yesterday at my table. I told him he had not a lover-like appearance, and that he should live like the enamourers of old, who fed only upon sighs and tears; but he relishes my provision better than my advice."

I have seen your brother's flame. Sir John shewed her to me last night at the play. She is a charming girl. I *must* be acquainted with her, though I suppose she is more your counterpart than mine.—Well! what a letter have I written! There is enough of it

to cover the floor in my dining room. 'Tis time to release you, and to subscribe myself your truly affectionate friend,

ANNE MAYNWARING.

P. S. Sir Richard sends his compliments with mine to you, to the respected though unknown Mrs. Villars, and to lady Egerton.

L E T T E R L X.

Miss VILLARS to lady MAYNWARING.

I Really wondered, dear madam, when I received your ladyship's letter, what new correspondent it came from; for to own the truth, I long since gave up the hopes of your performing your promise. It was not however less pleasing, and I take the earliest opportunity of thanking you for your kind, though late remembrance. If I tell you I thought your

silence was occasioned by *want of thought*, I don't believe I shall incur your displeasure, or be very remote from the truth. I know it did not proceed from want of affection.

I wish your lecture to the haughty lady may produce the desired effect. We laughed at the discomposure you excited in her, and thought her humiliation very just.

My acknowledgements are due to you, dear madam, for your kind wishes. Sir John is really very agreeable to me, and my mother authorizes me to tell you, that in about two months our hands will be joined. I am sure, if your ladyship was now to see me you would think me *very* dull and stupid ; for though I have no doubt of sir John's sincere attachment, though I really love him, yet I feel such apprehensions on the thought of leaving that dear parent, whose advice and tenderness have preserved in me a constant serenity of mind,

mind, that my heart is oppressed with a heaviness it cannot shake off. But I beg pardon for troubling you with the mention of those uneasy emotions which it is my duty to conquer.

I participate in your ladyship's happiness, and hope it will continue uninterrupted. You taste the heart-felt satisfaction of pleasing, by your every action, the person most dear to you.

I am glad you like Miss Leicester. I assure you her beauty is her least perfection, though she has as great a share of it as any woman I know. She is rather grave than gay; but even you, madam, with all your entertaining liveliness, must love this excellent young lady. She will add the title of Sister to that of Friend, at the same time I shall give my hand to Sir John.

I hope your ladyship will imitate my example in returning an early answer, unless so insipid a correspondent disgusts you.

My mother and I present our best respects to you and sir Richard. Lady Egerton will be so kind as to convey this letter.

I am, dear madam,
 your ladyship's
 affectionate humble servant,
 FLAVIA VILLARS.

LETTER LXI.

Lady MAYNWARING to Miss VILLARS.

I AM glad, my dear, I am to have you for a neighbour instead of a correspondent, for writing does not agree either with my constitution or inclination: I really thought I had got the rheumatism the day after I wrote my long letter; such a pain had I from my shoulder to my fingers ends. I was frightened at such a symptom of infirmity at my time of life, till happening to cast my eye upon my pen and ink, I gave up my alarms,
 and

and determined never to write so much again. A pen is a proper implement in the hand of such a grave matronly person as you are; but to one of my lively turn, the wings of Mercury would be more pleasing than all the inspirations of Apollo.

Your reproof, my dear, was more gentle than I deserved, and you find I have been so ungenerous as to trespass again in consequence of your forgiving temper. It is almost six weeks since I received yours, but let me tell you, though you was expeditious in answering mine, yet I had much less in quantity than I sent; and again, that as I have been dilatory in my reply, I will write you another letter very soon, and require only a personal answer, as I know your time is very much employed. Your acknowledgements will be ready to overflow, but restrain them; for, to moderate your gratitude, I will inform you that I shall now take the liberty of chiding you, and my next will

will contain something I want to communicate. To shew you I prefer your good to the pleasure of divulging a secret, I begin with upbraiding you for being melancholy on a prospect which would enliven the heart of any other woman. Would you always live with your mother, child? Prithee be more of a woman. You are not like Shakespeare's love-sick damsel, who "smiled at grief," (by the bye an odd kind of a description, for who did ever hear of smiling misery?) for you *grieve at joy*. Your mother, I am certain, though she will be unwilling to part from you, sacrifices her own pleasure to your interest, or rather this marriage will complete her wishes.—With whom could you have a better chance for happiness? I'll lay my life, you would not chuse, with all your *vapourisms*, to be of the *ancient not honourable order* of antiquated maidens. You are neither prude nor coquette, though I have sometimes *called* you *prudish*. You love sir John,
he

he idolizes you, and you have nothing to object but leaving your mother, from whom you can hear every day. You will be often with her, or she and your brother and sister in town with you. Lady Egerton, who is your sincere friend, will also be your neighbour. When you want to be laughed out of any grave freak, come to me. I think I have said enough to banish melancholy. Let me only add, that you will be ungrateful to Providence if you don't rejoice in the good it appoints you. With this grave reflection I conclude my letter, my *second* long letter, in defiance of rheumatic pains. Our compliments attend you and Mrs. Villars.

I am, my dear,

Your sincerely affectionate

A. MAYNWARING.

LETTER LXII.

Lady MAYNWARING to Miss VILLARS.

WELL, my Villars, now for the secret.
 —I have behaved foolishly.—“I expected a piece of *news*, lady Maynwar-
 “ring.” The *manner*, child, of my folly
 will be novelty to *you*, though here it is a
common disorder. Thus it was. Sir Richard
 and I went to an assembly. I had not been
 quite well, and was desired not to dance.
 My spirits revived at the sight of the com-
 pany, the sound of the music, &c. and I
 was shaking my foot to a brisk tune, when a
 brilliant young nobleman begged to have
 the honour of being my partner. I forgot
 my promise and my indisposition, and was
 so much elated by my lord’s sprightliness,
 and the chearfulness of the company, that I
 prattled away uncommonly. Sir Richard
 came to intreat I would dance no more; but
 I de-

I desired he would be good, and not interrupt me. My fop immediately interprets this request in his favour, and assumed such an air of consequence upon it, that though I, who meant no harm, was unwilling to think any was intended; yet I could not avoid discovering the misconstruction he put upon my gaiety.

He grew so exceedingly impertinent, that at last I gave him a most severe frown, and told him my fondness for dancing had induced me to break my promise, but that I did not know what excuse he could make for forgetting the respect due to the wife of Sir Richard Maynwaring. I then sat down; my lord looked like a fool, and I felt conscious of imprudence. I owned to my tender spouse that I had behaved indiscreetly, and the sweet tempered man forgave me. As giddy as you think me, and as I really am in general, yet I have often thought with concern of this affair. Depend upon it, my dear, I will be-
have

have better for the future. My lord had been enough acquainted with sir Richard and me, to know we are happy in each other; but when will vanity and *folly* cease their empire over the sexes?

Next week, I suppose, will give you a title and an husband. The first is a mere empty sound, the last sometimes proves a real blessing, and I hope yours will be so. I shall write no congratulatory epistle. You now have the best wishes of sir Richard, and those of

Your truly affectionate friend,
A. MAYNWARING.

LETTER LXIII.

Lady EGERTON to Mrs. STAMFORD.

I THINK it impossible there can be a happier set of people than are now assembled at G****. Miss Leicester and Miss Villars are the least chearful; indeed the sweet Flavia's

Flavia's countenance has even worn an air of melancholy which is now dispelled. Tomorrow is the day appointed for the marriages.

Yesterday Mrs. Villars found her daughter with me. My dear Flavia, said she, you have not the appearance of a bride elect. Miss Leiceſter is leſs chearful than uſual, but you look unhappy. Tell me, my love, if you wiſh to retract your engagement? Is Sir John leſs worthy, or are you leſs ſenſible of his merit, than when you gave him your heart? Confefs it to me, if you have reaſon for your change? If you have none, tho' you ſhew a levity of which I thought you incapable, yet to profeſs in the ſight of God, and in the preſence of men, a love you no longer feel, would be highly criminal. It would be leſs faulty to recede from your promiſe, than to confirm it without the power of fulfilling it.

Ah!

Ah! my dear mother, cried Miss Villars, eagerly snatching her hand, do not believe your child capable of such instability. I love Sir John with a more rational affection than I felt for Captain Welmore, and my uneasiness arises from my fears of being ever less dear to him; from the thoughts of exchanging the sweets of solitude for the tumult of a town life, and from apprehensions that I shall not properly discharge the duties of my elevated station: but there is a cause of uneasiness, continued she, bursting into tears, which affects me most sensibly. I must be parted from you! She threw her arms round Mrs. Villars's neck, and sobb'd aloud. My friend was greatly affected. My dear, my amiable child! said she, you will not lose me. I shall accompany you to town, and probably be a frequent visitor. Sir John and you will I hope pass some weeks with me every summer, and I will write as often as you desire. I suffer with you

in

in the thoughts of parting, yet such an establishment, if it make you happy, must render me so. I know you will adorn the station to which your merit raises you. Dry up your tears, my Flavia, my beloved daughter, lest Sir John should suspect he is become less dear to you. Indulge no doubts of the constancy of his affection; for you may encourage fears of every possible evil, till you are incapable of enjoying any real good.

This conversation was so tender, that it was some time before we were sufficiently recovered to join the rest of the company; but when we did, I had the pleasure of observing that Miss Villars was more chearful.

* * * * *

WEDNESDAY.

We are this minute returned from church. The brides behaved very well, and looked admirably. Miss Leicester, tho' she trembled very much, spoke distinctly and retained greater presence of mind than her sister,

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who

who changed colour frequently, and shed tears which possibly prevented her fainting. Her voice was scarcely audible. The two gentlemen's transports were evident. Their behaviour was decent and devout. The satisfaction of the parents and aunt was expressed in mute eloquence. I shared the joy of all parties. The ladies and gentlemen are gone to walk in the garden with the good reverend who joined their hands. I whispered Mrs. Villars that I would scribble a few lines to you, and return in a quarter of an hour. I shall have no more time for writing till to-morrow.

* * * * *

I never past a more agreeable day than yesterday. Mr. Reynolds, the clergyman, was obliged to leave us early, to receive an unexpected visitor. When he was gone, Mr. Villars, seeing the two brides rather thoughtful and silent, proposed to read some entertaining book. I asked Mrs. Villars to
favour

favour us with a composition of her own. She modestly said, she had just finished a little piece of real history, to which she had added, a vision the coinage of her own brain; but she had intended them only for the use of her children, and fear'd they would fail to contribute to our amusement. We eagerly intreated to read them, and Mrs. Villars fetch'd her little manuscript. She gave it into her son's hands. I obtained permission to transcribe it.—When Mr. Villars had finished the manuscript, we thanked my excellent friend for the entertainment and instruction she had afforded us. She shewed very great satisfaction in having contributed to ours. The brides had been particularly attentive.—Sir John Raymond proposed an airing in the coach, as the evening was remarkably pleasant. Accordingly we were driven a very agreeable tour. After supper we had a little concert.

This morning some friends called to pay their compliments. We intend setting out

for town next Monday, Sir John and Lady Raymond not chusing to receive here any company in form. They propose being down early in the Spring, when this business of ceremony is to be adjusted. Mrs. Villars is to be with her daughter in London: Mr. and Mrs. Villars will divide their time between Mr. Leicester and Lady Raymond. Mr. Villars is obliged to be in the country again within a month, having promised to officiate for a gentleman, whose age and infirmities render him incapable of performing the duties of the sacred function, and whose income from a small curacy is his sole support.

My friends here share in the satisfaction I feel, in consequence of the good account you give me of your own, Mr. Stamford's, and the dear babe's health.

Adieu! my child. When we arrive in London, you shall have another letter from

Your truly affectionate mother,

E. EGERTON.

(Inclosed in the foregoing.)

The HISTORY of
Mr. and Mrs. FAINWELL

IN all my observations upon the actions of others, I have endeavoured to preserve Christian charity, and to render my remarks subservient to my own, and my children's improvement. From the following story, a moral truly beneficial may be deduced.

Mr. Fainwell was an attorney, who settled in this country some years since. He married a woman agreeable in person, but much his inferior in understanding, and whose taste was not at all conformable to his own. His passion, however, was violent, and for some time after he became the husband, he continued the fond lover. A few years however changed the scene. Mrs. Fainwell was attacked by the small pox, and was greatly altered by the distemper. Her health visibly declined, and her dispo-

sition was rendered fretful by the disorders she suffered. Mr. Fainwell's affection, which had been founded on the mere personal graces of his wife, could not subsist after the alteration he observed in her; yet for a time he kept up an appearance of tenderness, which perhaps he might have preserved longer, had not the conversation and beauty of a young lady, who paid Mrs. Fainwell a visit of some weeks, attracted all his attention.

Miss Playfield (that was her name) was not only remarkably genteel, but had the utmost regularity of features. She was conversant with the best poetical writers; had a retentive memory, and an easy flow of expression. Her disposition was lively, and somewhat coquetish, but perfectly free from any design of giving pain, except to her admirers. This lady's conversation was extremely pleasing to Mr. Fainwell. He read to her his favourite authors, and was transported with her remarks. Mrs. Fainwell
had

had no relish for books. The practice of economical duties, and the employment of the needle, engrossed her time when her health permitted. Her face, which though never beautiful had been extremely agreeable, now wore the pallid hue of sickness. She was well made, but Miss Playfield was so uncommonly genteel, that Mrs. Fainwell appeared aukward in comparison. She was past the bloom of youth. Miss Playfield sparkled with all the lively graces of sixteen. Mr. Fainwell, though several years older than his wife, retained all his youthful admiration of beauty. He was charmed with Miss Playfield's person, he was delighted to find her taste for reading corresponded with his own. Mrs. Fainwell's frequent indispositions gave him opportunities of passing many agreeable hours with Miss Playfield. When tired of books, she could always entertain him with some lively anecdote or witty observation. Sometimes indulging the

natural vivacity of her temper, she amused herself in playing childish tricks with him. He romped with her. Both were I believe entirely free from any criminal intention; but how dangerous is it for human frailty to rely on its own powers for conquest, especially when attacked by the united forces of beauty and wit! Such a security betrayed Mr. Fainwell, whose heart was surrendered without an attempt to fortify its weakness.

Mrs. Fainwell, without any natural tincture of jealousy, found her suspicions excited by the insinuations of one of her servants. She attentively observed the conduct of her husband and Miss Playfield, and her fears were confirmed. Indignation inflamed her almost to madness. She upbraided Mr. Fainwell in terms the most unlikely to reclaim him, and even threatened to expose Miss Playfield, if she did not immediately leave the house. Mr. Fainwell, who notwithstanding his love for that young lady, had
always

always behaved with civility to his wife, felt less shame on the consciousness that her suspicions of his estranged affection were just, than resentment at the manner of the accusation. His regard for Miss Playfield, however, prompted him to defend her innocence with all the energy which truth and love could inspire. Mrs. Fainwell, enraged at this justification of her rival, loudly exclaimed against his perfidy. Her maid, who had been the cause of this disturbance, overheard it, and instantly informed Miss Playfield that her mistress was jealous of her and her master, and she had heard her threaten to expose them both. Miss Playfield laughed at this intelligence, and for some moments enjoyed the admiration she had excited; but when she considered that loss of reputation might be the consequence, and that she had disturbed the peace of a family, her fears, and her good nature operated so powerfully, that she determined

terminated to remove Mrs. Fainwell's suspicions by a different behaviour.

That lady, who really loved her husband, and had believed herself to be beloved by him, could not support the struggle of contending passions; the disorder of her mind brought on a violent fever, which soon put a period to her life. Miss Playfield left the house in the beginning of Mrs. Fainwell's illness. She was at first greatly affected by her death, but a succession of admirers, and a marriage with a noble lord, obliterated all remembrance of it. As for Mr. Fainwell, his concern was very short liv'd, and even his passion for Miss Playfield soon extinguished, by the absence of its object. He had some inclination for a second marriage, but the uncertainty of his temper kept him fluttering from beauty to beauty, till old age and infirmities gave him a different train of ideas, and made him relinquish the society of the young and gay. This affair, which hap-
pen'd

pen'd since I came hither, has often been the subject of my reflections.—You find, my dear children, a mere personal attachment is not the basis of connubial happiness : that as esteem can only subsist with mutual virtue, so a similarity of disposition in the avocations and amusements of life, is necessary to preserve that relish and complacency, without which wedded love can never be permanent.

Your are also taught by this story a strict and constant examination of your own hearts. We know that nothing but a conformity to the laws of God can entitle us to eternal felicity ; but we *insensibly* transgress our duty. “ We do not call our ways to remembrance.” Had Mr. Fainwell examined the sentiments of his heart ; had he compared them with the doctrines of christianity, he would have perceived his danger, and guarded against the deviation.—It is the judicious remark of a late excellent and dignified divine,

vine, that “we should *resist* those temptations we cannot *avoid*, and *avoid* those we cannot *resist*.”

When conscious of an abatement in the affection he owed his wife, Mr. Fainwell should have avoided any intercourse which threatened the destruction of his honour, and their future peace. On finding the person of his wife less pleasing to him, had he cultivated in her those qualities of the mind which must have secured his esteem, his affection might have been again conciliated.—In Mrs. Fainwell’s misfortunes, we see the fatal effects of ungoverned passion. If reason could have pleaded in the moment of resentment, she would have perceived the inconsistency of indulging the latter. She had lost the power of pleasing Mr. Fainwell, and if the suggestions of duty and the tender assiduities of love had been ineffectual to secure her husband’s affection, could she expect to regain it by severity and reproaches?

The

The inconsiderate Miss Playfield shews us, that gaiety is always blameable when not blended with discretion.

From reflections on this story, I am drawn into a consideration of the different sources, from whence the infelicities of marriage flow. I have seen persons united by tender love and true esteem, who yet have been unhappy from little petulancies of temper: others rendered so by indulging all the luxuriances of imagination, and attributing them to the goddess of their hearts. These consider marriage as a sensual Paradise, a Halcyon scene, which clouds cannot overcast, nor storms ruffle and discompose. They are unprepared for the vicissitudes of life, and the changes incident to the human frame. No wonder then that marriage soon becomes the tomb of their affection. When love is cemented by mutual esteem and soft complacency, even the indulgencies of sense are submitted to the dominion of reason,
and

and its enjoyments are heightened by considering them as the lawful, yet meanest pleasures of a Christian.—I indulged these meditations the other evening till the following vision presented itself to my imagination,

Methought there was a complaint amongst some of the female sex, that the alteration in their persons had estranged from them the affection of their husbands; and I heard an edict published at the command of Truth, that every individual should appear before her. A general assembly of females attended her summons. She held in her hand a looking-glass, with these words imprinted on it, “A Mirror for true beauty.” I was a witness to such changes, as both delighted and shocked me; but I will mention only three metamorphoses, which shewed in the most striking light the virtues of the mirror.

The first of these was a young creature of fifteen, adorned with every charm that art

ait and nature could bestow. As she approached the glass, her cheek glowed with the hope of heightened beauty, and her eye sparkled at the thought of excelling every competitor. Conscious of superior attractions, she cast around her a look of ineffable disdain. But what an astonishing metamorphosis! on seeing herself in the mirror, she started back with horror and amazement. Her features became enlarged and irregular. Her shape was distorted, and her whole appearance inspired disgust. We saw her surrounded by flatterers, and encouraging a multiplicity of admirers. In another part of the mirror, we beheld her insulting depressed merit, caressing splendid vice, and despising reputation and virtue.

Behold! said the Goddess, the effect of inordinate vanity and immoderate love of pleasure! Take this glass, continued she, presenting her with a small one of the same inestimable value, and if thy heart
exult

112 THE EXEMPLARY MOTHER.

exult over intrinsic merit, because set in a rough unpolished shell, view thyself in this mirror, and blush with shame for thy folly in despising the true beauty. Every secret thought shall be revealed, and on the features be impressed every latent emotion of the heart.

Another female now drew near the mirror. She seemed to be advanced to the summer of life. Her face without symmetry of feature was inexpressibly pleasing, her person graceful and admirably formed; with an air of diffidence she cast her eyes upon the glass, but an agreeable surprize detained them. Every charm received an additional brilliancy, and every grace was improved into perfection. Thou seest, said the Goddess, that virtue can add new radiance to beauty. This little glass shall assist thy perseverance. When thou beholdest thyself in it, reason justifies thy self-approbation. Thou possessest charms which will flourish in unfading

fading bloom, and the perfection of which will entitle thee to the blessings of immortality.

The third person who advanced moved slowly forwards, with her eyes fixed upon the ground. Her features were regular, but her complexion was faded. Melancholy and want of health had reduced her to an emaciated state. Her eyes had lost their lustre, but when she raised them on the spectators, they shed mildness and benignity. She placed herself before the mirror, and I never was so much surprized as at the alteration. Her complexion became of the most transcendent whiteness, and her cheeks were enlivened with the roseat bloom of health. Her eyes sparkled with celestial radiance; her whole person appeared the temple of a divinity. We saw her in the faithful mirror wiping the tear from the orphan's eye, and causing "the widow's heart to sing for joy.". We beheld the livid hue of sickness dispersed by

her assiduities, and the gloom of despondency vanish at her approach; again we saw her supplicating at the throne of heaven, for the reformation of an husband who had deserted her; in another place instructing her children in their duty even to the parent who neglected them.

We gazed on her with reverence and awful love. See! said the Goddess of Truth, see! mortals, one of my purest votaries! These, continued she, pointing to the objects of her amiable daughter's benevolence, these thankful hearts offering the effusions of gratitude, give her a foretaste of celestial harmony. Her's are charms which remain uninjured by time, and secure the enjoyments of eternity! Let the sensualist, whose admiration extends no farther than the vermeil tints on beauty's cheek, view their metamorphosis in this mirror for *true loveliness*. Let him see also, that fine features receive their greatest charms from virtue. Or let him behold

behold thee, my exalted daughter, in the glass, and he will distinguish what constitutes the real beauty. Who will lament the depredations of time upon the human structure, whilst the soul triumphs in the promise that “this corruptible shall put on incorruption?” Behold! ye repining mortals, *behold in the sincere CHRISTIAN the true beauty!*

LETTER LXIV.

Lady EGERTON to Mrs. STAMFORD.

DEAR DAUGHTER,

WE all left Essex in good spirits except lady Raymond, whose heart was oppressed with melancholy. She went through all the rooms, her eyes filled with tears. When she came to mine, You will blame me, madam, said she, for indulging this sadness with such a prospect of happiness before me. But I know not how to leave this beloved spot—She was unable to say more.

Indeed, my dear lady Raymond, you do want a little more resolution, answered I.—I own it, madam, interrupted she; this is a weakness I will conquer. I pay a bad compliment to my husband, continued she, wiping away her tears, in shewing such unwillingness to accompany him; but my heart is tender, too tender for my peace. How happily has every hour of my life passed away in this sweet place! It is not that sir John is not infinitely dear to me, but my fears are alarmed on the thoughts of the change in my station, and the difficulty of fulfilling its duties. Would to God I had been fixed in an humbler state, and been the neighbour of my dear mother!

She hurried from me. I was infected with her grief. Even Mrs. Villars's fortitude was shaken. I found her weeping, but she soon recovered more composure, and imparted it to me.

When

When we were some miles distant from G****, lady Raymond appeared tolerably chearful. As for Mr. Villars and his lady, I never observed a more promising appearance of happiness. She is now very amiable, and she will improve in true wisdom, as she determines to make my friend's virtues the model for her imitation.

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I am just returned from sir John Raymond's. The ladies were preparing for a visit to some shops when I went up. Lady Maynwaring was soon after admitted, who desired to be of the party.

You are *so* grave, and so *very* prudent, said she, to Mrs. Villars and lady Raymond, that I am certain you will not be perfectly in taste without my instructions. I must have all this old furniture displaced ; every thing *transmogrified*. And then *your* dress, my dear, there must be an entire new regulation—Your silks are not rich enough—your laces are now quite unfashionable. Your jewels

must be new set. In old lady Raymond's time, they might be modish, but now they are not *wearable*. Indeed your whole appearance is rather antique. I could lay out some thousands to advantage for you.

I am almost convinced, lady Maynwaring answered Mrs. Villars, that the present taste is the height of extravagance. True taste is surely founded on judgement: propriety is its essence. My daughter's dress, and the appearance of her house, should not disgrace Sir John's fortune. I would have her secure the good opinion of his friends, which will confirm his approbation of his choice. I know something must be allowed for the mere superfluities of life, but it is imprudent to hazard the want of its real necessities; a common and sad effect of modern luxury! Sir John's inclination must direct my child in her choice of ornaments for her person and furniture, and I am certain his allowance will amply comprize the extent of her desires.

Well,

Well, but Mrs. Villars, resumed lady Maynwaring, what would become of all the pretty knick-knacks, which are the sole employment and support of many in the city, if the people of fashion were to buy nothing but what they *really want*? Oh! lud, it is what we *please* to want (as the master of the *toy-shop* observes) that influences us to most of our purchases.

Don't be apprehensive, madam, that these people will want customers, said Mrs. Villars smiling; there will always be those who will keep them in employ; but if it were otherwise, and they were to exchange their trifles for works of real utility, would it not be equally advantageous to the vender, and more eligible for the purchaser? Surely whilst so many objects of distress supplicate for relief, *they* cannot think themselves faithful stewards of the bounties of providence, or of their own happiness, who for the sake of

tinsel ornaments, would sacrifice the extatic pleasures of benevolence.

Pardon me, lady Maynwaring, continued my excellent friend, for this gravity ; but I would have you superior to those customs which can only plead fashion in defence of folly, and you profess an esteem for me which I wish to deserve. I will even allow, that what are superfluities to one person, are necessities to another ; but you must also confess, that the gratification of some desires, only excites additional and unbounded wishes. —Well ! I vow, cried lady Maynwaring, you have abated my eagerness after shopping. But come, a little spice of curiosity remains. Let's have no more of this at present. You are an excellent woman, madam Villars, but you must have a little mercy upon me. I'm in my novitiate of improvement.

During the conversation, lady Raymond was entirely silent ; but I saw by her looks that her sentiments concurred with her mother's

ther's.—I wish she could conquer a pensive sadness, which renders her incapable of enjoying Mrs. Villars's company. She dreads the moment of separation. I have seen very little of sir John since we returned to London, for he has a large acquaintance; lady Raymond does not complain of his absence, though she mentions him with the utmost affection. Filial tenderness now almost entirely engrosses her heart. How I shall pity her when she parts from this beloved, this valuable parent. Mr. and Mrs. Villars are in my dining room: I must therefore conclude abruptly. I am, my dear daughter,

Your's most affectionately,

E. EGERTON,

L E T T E R LXV.

Lady EGERTON to Mrs. STAMFORD.

MY DEAR CHILD,

AT the request of Mrs. Villars and lady Raymond, I have mixed in the gay circle of visitors, which has filled the drawing room of the latter; and, since that fatiguing ceremony, have accompanied my friends to some of the places of public resort. To-morrow is the day, which separates the best of parents from the most affectionate of children. I am invited to pass this day with them, and even to sleep at sir John's this night, that I may share my dear friend to the last moment, and exert my endeavours to calm lady Raymond's uneasiness. How will her too susceptible heart sustain the shock!

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We have parted till the morning. What struggles have I observed in the distressed daughter! She feared that sir John should
resent

resent her poignancy of affliction; But what can I do? said she, taking her mother and me aside; my grief will not be suppressed. Oh! madam, when shall we meet again? Be comforted, my child, answered the tender parent; you are too much affected by a short separation. It will not be many months before I shall see you in the country. I leave you in the possession of a tender husband, and other ties will perhaps divide your affection. May the dear pledges of your love cement the union of your hearts, and may I see my daughter's virtues dawning in their infant minds! My letters will overflow with parental tenderness, and you know your's will be always acceptable to me. Cease, my child, to lament an indispensable absence; resume your usual serenity, and convince sir John, you have not vowed a love for him which you do not feel.—That gentleman now approached us. Come, my dear, said he to his lady, conquer this excess of melancholy.

You

You forget you are a wife, as well as a daughter.—He turned away. Lady Raymond's eyes were fixed on the ground, while he spoke; then casting them up to heaven, she seemed to supplicate for fortitude in this severe trial. Sir John's looks terrified me; he shewed no appearance of tender sympathy, but a gloomy discontent overspread his countenance. I yet tremble for lady Raymond. Dear creature! how unable is she to support the least unkindness!

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She is gone! Mrs. Villars, her son and daughter-in-law have left us. Never was I witness to so heart-affecting a scene! Lady Raymond hung round her mother's neck in speechless agony; Mrs. Villars clasped her to her breast; their tears mingled. Mr. and Mrs. Villars, though deeply affected, yet are too happy in each other to share the bitterness of their sister's anguish. I know not when the mother and daughter would have separated

separated, if sir John had not interrupted the tender embrace. For shame, lady Raymond, be more composed, said he; you are less than woman! Are you not to meet again in a few months?

The amiable sufferer lifted up her sweet face, on which the most expressive woe was painted. Ah! sir John, said she, pity and forgive my weakness; I will, if possible, be more tranquil. Then turning again to Mrs. Villars, My dear, dear mother, cried she, this shall be my last farewell! embracing her. She withdrew her arms, and putting her handkerchief to her eyes, I cannot see you go, added she, but indeed I shall soon be more easy.

Mrs. Villars, whose heart was oppressed with grief, immediately gave her hand to sir John, and went down stairs. She stepped into the coach, and bowed an adieu. I hastened to lady Raymond, who was in her own apartment. I endeavoured to conceal
my

my uneasiness, that I might dissipate her affliction. She desired me to leave her for a few minutes, and promised to meet me in the dining room, with a more serene countenance. I took the opportunity of scribbling thus far, but will now attend her again.

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Lady Raymond attempted to assume a different appearance when she met me, but she was visibly the greater sufferer for the restraint. Lady Maynwaring came up soon after I re-entered the dining room, and consented to pass the day with us, at our earnest desire. She tried to divert her tender friend's thoughts from the subject of her concern, but the endeavour was unsuccessful. Lady Raymond addressed herself several times to sir John, with a sweetness that seemed apprehensive of having given offence. He did not behave with so much tenderness as I wished; and I observed her heart felt his indifference, with the most acute sensibility. In
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the afternoon, lady Raymond's melancholy really abated, and sir John resumed his chearfulness and good humour. This alteration in him, gave his lady such delight, as made every uneasy emotion subside. Her eyes sparkled, her cheeks glowed, and she appeared in full radiance of beauty. Lady Maynwaring and I rejoiced, at leaving her in so agreeable a flow of spirits.

I was awake so early this morning that my eyes are now almost closed : I am afraid I shall scarcely add, in legible characters, that I am, with love and blessing to each dear child,

Your sincerely affectionate mother,

E. EGERTON.

LETTER LXVI.

Mrs. VILLARS to Lady RAYMOND:

MY DEAR CHILD,

I Shared so severely the anguish of your heart, on our separation, I could not attempt to mitigate its excess; but reason, or rather the dictates of Christianity convince me, we shall be blameable in indulging an immoderate sorrow. I intreat you, my Flavia, to be influenced by the same motive which consoles me; and, if we consider calmly, we shall own that our situation is in every other respect so happy, as infinitely to exceed our cause for afflictions. My children have shewn in their choice, that prudence may be blended with sincere affection, and that true love is not the blind mutable deity painted in poetry and romance; but the offspring of reason, congenial with virtue, and co-existent with eternity. Oh! my child, with what refined

finest tenderness, did I regard your dear father! and with what energy did revelation soothe the affliction of my soul on his loss, by confirming my hopes of a blissful reunion! These thoughts, my Flavia, ennoble the mind, purify the heart, soften the unavoidable calamities of life, and heighten our relish of all its blessings. Rejoice, my dear daughter, in being one cause of the sensations I feel on the prospect, that you and my son will enjoy such felicity as I have described.

Be assiduous in securing the esteem of your husband. Love founded on external charms, and which only seeks the gratification of the senses, will soon change its object, and be pleased with novelty; but where esteem is the basis of love, even the lowest pleasures of the man are exalted, and distinguish him from the animal. Never expect that your superiority in beauty alone will fix your husband's heart. Even the mere sensualist

prefers novelty to beauty. An agreeable person in a wife is as likely to preserve an husband's love as a fine one; and your mental perfections, my dear child, must secure Sir John's esteem, if you do not render yourself less amiable in his eyes by your tears, and unavailing regrets. A wife must study to be always obliging, or her husband will seek that complacency from others, in which she fails.

Do not expect, my dear child, to meet with a *reciprocal* fund of tenderness from your husband. Few men are capable of it. I never knew but one. Business and diversions prevent its cultivation; and most probably it is wisely ordained by providence, that an exquisite degree of sensibility is seldom felt but by those whose duties are chiefly domestic. Sir John has given proofs of a disinterested love; but perhaps he may not always be so attentive to the gratification of your refined tenderness as you wish. Never
lay

lay any restraint upon his visits, &c. but endeavour to behave in the manner which will be most agreeable to him. Whilst the general tenour of his actions shew the constancy of his attachment, let not a casual expression occasion you any uneasiness; for we are more frequently hurt by our own misconstructions, than by any intended unkindness. Many men mistake the tender fears of diffidence for injurious suspicions, and resent them accordingly. Do not therefore indulge them, but cultivate every useful and pleasing qualification.

I need not observe to *you*, my dear, that chastity is a purity of thought, word and action; for you are purity itself. I believe it is equally unnecessary to mention to you a constant unremitted attention to neatness, and such a dress as is most conformable to your husband's inclination. Always distinguish between true delicacy and false shame. To affectation your mind is superior.

Let unreserved confidence reign between you and your husband. It will render remonstrances unnecessary; which are more frequently thought to proceed from an affected superiority, than a desire of awakening to conviction. Appearances are often so deceitful, that they may warp our judgement; suspicions may be injurious, and inspire disgust, but confidence banishes apprehensions.

My dear child, are you not too apprehensive? Do not you shew a distrust which may really abate Sir John's love? I will give you, my Flavia, a recital of my own weakness, which I hope will fortify you. Soon after I married Mr. Villars, I buried my last surviving parent and relation, so that all the affection of a naturally tender heart centered in him. It is impossible for words to describe my love. He repaid it with an equal fondness; but my diffidence rendered me fearful, that when he saw other people in company lively and entertaining, he might be disgusted
by

by my insipidity. I could not conquer a reserve which made me silent, when I knew he wished me to impart my sentiments. The apprehensions of losing any part of my husband's regard rendered me very uneasy. He perceived that I was melancholy, and tenderly insisted on knowing the cause. A fear of offending him kept me a while silent, but Mr. Villars still begging I would tell him, I at last, bursting into tears, owned to him the disquietude of my heart. He gazed upon me some minutes without answering; then taking my hand, My dearest Sophia, said he, I thank you for this acknowledgement. My heart gives me a delightful assurance, that it is firmly attached to you and you alone; yet I do not impute your fears to any particular suspicions of me, but to your observation of the frailty of human nature in general, and to your imperfect knowledge of your own merit. Would you examine your own mind, you would find in it so many virtues, that

the examination would surely enable you to subdue all apprehensions which occasion a suppression of your sentiments. I now give you a solemn promise, that to heaven and you I will be accountable for every thought, word and action; I will behave with no particular caution in your presence, as this would introduce a constraint which might have dangerous consequences. My fidelity is guarded by considerations of love and duty; yet I intreat of you, my dearest Sophia, as you value my eternal happiness, that you will tell me if any part of my conduct affect your peace. Should you think any of my amusements have an improper tendency, or should my reasons fail of contributing to your entire satisfaction, conceal nothing from me. Whatever diversions I may partake in *your* absence, if mine causes you the least uneasiness, remember that nothing is nor ought to be so desirable to me as the preservation of your happiness. If my natural disposition inclined
me

me to a dissipated life, I should not give this advice, nor would it be prudent in you to act in this manner. The mildest insinuations, though not really injurious, would then be offensive, and a woman who finds her husband to be of a gay turn, must endeavour to appear always chearful and agreeable. Hard task to an ingenuous mind! yet religious considerations have supported many persons in this arduous trial. Yours, my Sophia, shall be an easier task. I am persuaded that your mind and person must suffer an entire change before I be able to make any comparison to the diminution of my love and esteem.—These assurances composed me to tranquillity, and I never afterwards indulged the painful propensity.

I shall be impatient for a letter from you, and hope you will give me a pleasing account of yourself.

We had an agreeable journey down.—Your brother and sister are as happy as it is possible human beings can be.

That you may enjoy the utmost temporal happiness, which is consistent with the highest degree of christian virtue, is the constant prayer of

Your ever affectionate mother,
SOPHIA VILLARS.

L E T T E R LXVII.

Mr. VILLARS to Lady RAYMOND.

PERHAPS my dear sister might condemn me for want of affection in supporting with more calmness the separation which so much afflicted her; but she must consider, that I had with me the two persons most dear to me, and was morally convinced, I left her in a situation where her merit will be rewarded and conspicuous. She must pardon me for adding, I thought her grief a little too violent for the occasion. Yet, my dear Lady Raymond, I was not insensible. My mother's unparalleled tenderness must render her

her absence very painful to you, who have seldom been from under her maternal wing, and are fearful of moving in the exalted region you are now placed in. Be not too diffident, my sister. You have an excellent heart and improved understanding, and the justest sentiments of religion and virtue. Enjoy the grandeur you deserve, and be a frequent witness of our happiness.

My Isabella tells me I must now resign the pen to her. *Must*, says the saucy wife! Is this the language of obedience? Oh! these women! How difficult is it to them to submit to their conjugal vow. "What have you not finished yet, Mr. Villars?" No, Mrs. Villars, I have a mind to exercise your patience. A very necessary virtue, let me tell you, in a wife. I will give you the pen, my love, when I have subscribed myself my dear Flavia's

Most affectionate brother,

FREDERICK VILLARS.

(Mrs. VILLARS *in continuation.*)

THE *saucy wife*, as your brother calls me, will not confirm the character her husband has given her, for she will write to her dear friend and sister in a truly commiserating strain. My heart truly felt for you, tho' I could not express its sympathetic tenderness; and yet, my dear Lady Raymond, if Sir John is as kind and affectionate a husband as Mr. Villars, why should I address you in terms of condolance? It is impossible to describe my conjugal happiness, which, I hope, your own situation represents. Then such a mother too! But let me not revive your uneasiness. Consider, my beloved sister, the time of your meeting is not very distant, and we shall never suffer a long separation from each other.

Mr. Villars tells me the post will be gone. One line indeed would have comprehended all I have written. I meant only to acquaint

quaint you, I am one of the happiest of women, and that I shall ever be

Your affectionate sister and friend,

ISABELLA VILLARS.

LETTER LXVIN.

GEORGE RANTLEY, Esq. to Sir JOHN
RAYMOND.

IS it possible that you should be such a renegade from your professions, as to be a member of the fettered society? What! have you devoted yourself to one woman for better and worse? I received a letter yesterday with this information, and I can scarcely credit it. Prithee, be it true or false, give me a line; if you are thus tied, our friendship is loosened, for I will never have an intimate who contentedly wears the collar; and I have a notion you will soon be henpecked.—I shall give no account of my proceedings. I fear you are not the man I
once

once thought you; and therefore, till I know more of you, I shall only subscribe myself,

Your humble servant,
GEORGE RANTLEY.

LETTER LXIX.

Sir JOHN RAYMOND to GEORGE
RANTLEY, Esq.

DEAR GEORGE,

I RECEIVED your letter when my happiness was in its meridian, and to own the truth, I was then determined not to continue the correspondence; but man (as well as woman) is subject to inconstancy. I am married.—I have really been happier in the possession of one virtuous woman's person and affections, than in having been favourably distinguished by many women of *fashion* or *pleasure*. Perhaps these are synonymous terms. My wife (unfashionable sound) is
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the gentlest of her sex. Her heart, naturally prone to tenderness, is attached to me with such an excess of love, as gives me no fears of dividing her affection with the profest danglers of the age. Her mother seems to possess the next place in her regard; but filial affection, though inexpressibly tender, is unmixed with that anxiety which is blended with her conjugal love.---But you will ask, what were the attractions that could tempt me to commit matrimony, for you are insensible to the charms of a woman's mind.—And have I been just to them? Ah! George, do not ask me.—But to proceed. My father's severity made the pleasures of the town more desirable than perhaps they would otherwise have appeared; and I had been so long immersed in them, that every modest woman was insipid or disgusting to my taste 'till I saw Miss Villars. Her person is elegantly formed; her features delicately proportioned, and I had never before seen so much unaffected

affected sweetness and humility expressed in a female countenance. I was captivated ;— her looks and whole behaviour damped every presumptuous hope. I saw her frequently, and lost my relish for every diversion she did not partake ; yet, as I knew my father would not permit me to marry her, I did not disclose my passion ; and her mother, fearful of my designs, carried her from town. For some days I was inconsolable, but a set of gay acquaintance once more recalled me to scenes of dissipation. I had almost entirely forgotten Miss Villars, when my father's death gave me the power of asking her hand. Custom was so prevalent in me, that when no other obstacle prevented, my own rebellious fondness for dissolute pleasures made me fluctuate. My passion for Miss Villars at last triumphed.—I declared my love. My proposals were accepted ; for my father's rigour had this good effect, that my pleasures were too private to injure my public character.

ter. The delicate, yet unaffected tenderness of Flavia's heart, supported my passion. We were married at her mother's, whom I reverence, yet fear. I felt all the joy I professed. Lady Raymond's was allayed by the thoughts of parting from her mother, who agreed at our request to accompany us to town for a month.—I soon found, that a life of regularity had no charms for me, but those of novelty.—Women talk of reformed rakes for husbands, but how few are there who tread the paths of reformation? And where are the women qualified to render them happy? Accustomed to the various arts of the voluptuous, whose business it is to deceive us into pleasure, without requiring from us the sedulities or constancy of a refined passion; the tender solicitude of my wife, fatigues, constrains, and upbraids me. Her love renders her melancholy when we part, and occasions an effusion of overflowing softness at my return. I never 'till now contracted
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an engagement which distressed me. I had always found my charmer gloomy or joyous as my humour directed. But Flavia loves me with a sensibility which is painful to her, and irksome to me; I cannot feign that passion which is dissipated. Her person and conversation have no longer those charms for me, I once perceived in them. She expects from me a tenderness I am incapable of. I see other women, gay and lively when their husbands are absent, and quite satisfied with their indifference when present. Their wit enlivens me, I am pleased with their persons, I cannot resist their advances.—From my wife I experience only the anxieties of love, yet I believe her understanding is superior to most women's. She has too much sweetness of temper, and sensibility of others' pain to be a wit; yet I really believe I should like her better if she diverted me more.

Would

Would to God I had never married! I am sure my wife has reason for the same wish, for where, with her delicate sensibility, could she meet with a fellow mind?—What can you make of this unconnected letter, but that I am married to a too amiable woman, that I am guilty of infidelity, miserable, and the cause of misery. Adieu!

LETTER LXX.

Lady RAYMOND to Mrs. VILLARS:

THE sight of your letter, my dear and honoured mother, gave me a painfully-pleasing emotion. Ah! why was I so soon deprived of the happiness your presence always excites in me? Why, but because my husband was less solicitous to contribute to my satisfaction than I had reason to expect. Ah! madam, I do not enjoy that tender intercourse of soul with sir John, which you have often so feelingly described. I flattered my-

self with the hopes of finding the tenderness of my own heart repaid by a kindred mind; but, alas! sir John's is not that refined, that ever-sedulous affection I wished to inspire! Your unequalled merit, indeed, *claimed* an exalted return of love; and such is the sensibility of my heart, that I cannot be satisfied without a reciprocal tenderness.

Fearful my melancholy might displease my husband, and attending to the suggestions of reason and duty, serenity was soon restored to my breast. Sir John, for two days, behaved in a manner which increased my love; but on the third he left me, and I saw him no more till one o'clock the next morning. My joy at his return made me fly to meet him. He appeared entirely indifferent, expressed no concern when I told him I had been uneasy during his unexpected absence, nor shared my delight in meeting. He only asked me why I sat up, and why I chose to be alone, when I might have spent the evening

evening with lady Egerton, or some more gay acquaintance. How could you imagine I could be enough at ease, said I, to enjoy conversation, while ignorant of your safety? You mentioned no engagement, and I expected your return every moment.

He made no other answer, than that he should often be from home, and he would have me partake with my friends some of the public diversions, and not be always fretting and crying at home. He then abruptly left me. I was so shocked at his manner and expressions, that I burst into tears.

Ah! madam, is this the behaviour I must expect from a husband whom I love? Must we frequent different places of amusement? And will he be always displeased when I give him proofs of my affection? Surely my late anxieties were prophetic! I shall never more be happy! Alas! I have scarcely seen him these five days. He breakfasts in his dressing room, and goes out immediately af-

ter he is dress'd, seldom returns till dinner, and then I see him no more till next morning. I obey his commands and retire at eleven, but rest I am unacquainted with. Lady Egerton and lady Maynwaring, who always find me alone, must be surprized at his absence ; but they are silent, and it is my duty to be so.

Alas ! if when " the spirit is willing the flesh is weak," how fatal may the consequences most probably be, where the *disposition* is prone to gallantry ! Perhaps I am too fearful. Were my husband even to give me repeated promises of fidelity, I should have fears lest confidence in his own strength should betray him into weakness. Now, sir John considers his errors as fashionable gallantries ; and perhaps, if he doubted his power of resisting temptations, I should share his fears, and think they arose from conviction of his own weakness.

Continual

Continual uneasiness has injured my health, and I am more altered than you can imagine. Write frequently, my dear mother, and without reserve. There is no reason to fear your letters should fall into sir John's hands; he is always absent at the time they are brought.

I thank you, madam, for your parental advice. Alas! the wretchedness of my situation can be alleviated by your letters only. Pray for me, that I may be restored to happiness, or that my fortitude may be equal to the severe trial, which seems to be the appointment of providence for

Your unhappy,

but ever dutiful daughter,

FLAVIA RAYMOND.

P. S. I can't write at present to my brother and sister. Tell them I most fervently pray for the continuance of their happiness. Oh! that I could tell them I feel the felicity they describe!

LETTER LXXI.

Sir JOHN RAYMOND to GEORGE RANTLEY,
Esq.

WELL, George, I am not the hen-pecked husband your prophetic spirit indicated. I am still, and I believe ever shall be, an inconstant.—Let not the Beauty trust to the power of her personal charms, for securing an habitual rover who is become an husband, for he will be more pleased with a new face than with a fine one that is familiar. I swear I find it so, and for mental excellence it pleases *us* only, while the person is the object of admiration. If *I* was a modest woman I should be a very prudent one. I would never marry a rake, because he would be insensible of my real value; but lady Raymond was deceived in my character. My wife is allowed to be handsome, I know she is amiable. It gratifies my vanity to see the admiration she excites, and the indifference she regards it with; she treats me with

with such distinguished preference as renders me the object of envy. I have sometimes considered whether I could not be perfectly satisfied with a woman who is the idol of most connoisseurs in beauty: For a short time whilst vanity reigns the paramount passion, and she can supply food for it, perhaps I might; but vanity is not my predominant failure, and if it were, it is gratified still more pleasingly. Love of the sex is my foible. Though I am pleased with my wife for placing a confidence in me, I am more inclined to abuse it. I cannot see the young and beautiful without feeling a tender admiration, nor join in the mirth of the witty without indulging dangerous emotions. But when wit and beauty combine, how irresistible are their force! To fix the attention of a gay coquet for whom humble lovers sigh in vain, would it not be a temptation to the most resolute in virtue? I am sure it requires more fortitude to resist than I am mas-

ter of.—Here love (if I may call so, a light, extinguishable, wavering flame) and vanity exult. I am glad my wife is blind to my inconstancy. I could not bear the remonstrances I own I somewhat deserve. How impossible it is to be attentive to the ease of others when our own is destroyed. Why then, the friend of my soul would urge, do you not endeavour to recover it?—Because I know it is not the work of a day, and I have not sufficient resolution to accomplish it. I have tasted the sweets of virtuous love, but I have lost my relish for it. I am now too guilty to enjoy it; yet, perhaps I am not much more criminal than formerly; I was then attached only to the professedly immodest, now I am divided between those and the professedly virtuous of the fair sex, who yet are too volatile to be attentive to the preservation of their characters. In what character will you consider *me*? As much as one can be, who is not a friend to himself, I am your's.

L E T T E R LXXII.

Mrs. VILLARS. to Lady RAYMOND.

YOUR situation distresses me, my dear child, but I exhort you never to indulge despondency, and I can enforce the precept by my example. I feel the tenderest participation in your misfortune, and offer up the most earnest supplication for your re-established happiness.

Your husband, my dear, was educated under the rigid discipline of an austere father, and restrained from the amusements frequented by others of his rank and age, which perhaps, because they were forbidden, appeared more desirable. Released from his confinement he is fascinated by pleasures which at present retain all the attraction of novelty. He was captivated with your personal accomplishments, and perhaps no otherwise affected by your virtues than with fears of losing you by a dishonourable address.

dress. He has obtained possession of your heart and hand, but probably he is still insensible to the charms of virtue. Your attention to me, and the melancholy which oppressed you even before my departure, might not only offend sir John, but render the gaiety of others more pleasing.—To inspire him with a love of virtue, you must not preach to him grave lessons of morality, but indulge him in those amusements which have the sanction of reason. A company of select friends at home, and sometimes an agreeable party abroad will diversify the scene, and a well-chosen book will afford an hour of entertainment to the most volatile disposition. Try these experiments, my dear child, and do not doubt of their success by perseverance. Endeavour to appear chearful, be always studious to oblige. “To hope for better days,” says an excellent writer, “is promising to deserve them.” Remember that the duty of a wife varies with the disposition

position of her husband. In a word, comply with your husband's inclinations as far as you can do so without prejudice to virtue. Sir John is the object of your tenderest regard, and I hope his future conduct will prove him to be worthy of the preference you gave him. If you despair of his constancy, your love will abate, and your attempts to please him become unanimated. I believe, and hope you are the mistress of his heart, and that you will guide its movements till it attain a settled habit of virtue; he will then prefer your conversation to any foreign amusements, and his mind will be enlarged by a mutual communication of sentiments and opinions.

I flatter myself you will soon confirm these delightful presages, and that every future information will delineate a perfect picture of connubial happiness. Your brother and sister rejoice in the hope that you have overcome your depression of spirits at our parting. I have

have mentioned nothing of your subsequent uneasiness.

Our affectionate respects attend you. I am shocked at the occasion that requires me to write a letter unfit for your husband's perusal, and which I must intreat you to burn, to avoid a discovery of your having intrusted me with such a secret. I hope an unre-served confidence in each other will soon be established between you.

Farewel, my dear child ! Put your trust in God, and he will be either your support or deliverer.

Believe me to be

Your ever tenderly affectionate mother,
and faithful friend,

SOPHIA VILLARS.

LETTER LXXIII.

Lady RAYMOND to Mrs. VILLARS.

Dearest and ever honour'd MADAM.

THE contents of my last letter entitled me to your compassion ; but I have reason to fear that the subject of this will incur your disapprobation. Oh ! my dear mother, I can no longer address you with the delightful confidence of self-esteem. I am involved in all the bitterness of remorse ! I am miserable in that success, from which I expected to be restored to happiness ! Unworthy child of so excellent a parent ! This is not my first offence against you and my own character ; but ah ! madam, if *you* desert me, I shall be wretched beyond redress. Can you forgive me ? But you know not the nature of my fault. I will impart it with the utmost sincerity. Alas ! the only atonement I can now make to you !

I fol-

I followed the advice in your letter. I invited my friends and such of my gay acquaintance as I knew were agreeable to Sir John. I accompanied them to the Play-house, &c. I appeared chearful, for I endeavoured to banish thought. Sir John was pleased, but not with me; he mixed with the company at home, and I saw him at public places, but he never went with me, nor took the least notice of me. He seemed to consider it as a breach of politeness to be seen with his wife. Judge, madam, what I suffered! Several days passed in this manner. I was distressed at my ineffectual attempts; I knew not how to act! — A fatal design entered my imagination. I had observed that Sir John look'd dissatisfied, if he saw me conversing with any of his own sex, and this observation suggested to me a scheme, which succeeded, and has made me miserable.

Amongst the gentlemen who are acquainted with my husband, and personally known

to

to me, is one Sir William Burroughs. He is handsome, genteel, lively, and polite. He was at the play last Monday, and sat in the same box with me. He addressed himself to me several times. Sir John who sat in the opposite box with some ladies, saw us, and appeared visibly disconcerted. I own I triumphed at a proof of jealousy, which I thought manifested some remains of affection for me: desirous to heighten it, I increased his fears. I talked with Sir William; I assumed an air of gaiety, and my husband's uneasiness was so violent, that he left his company and entered our box. Sir William accosted him with his usual freedom, but was answered coolly by my husband; who placing himself near me, gazed on me with such an air of apprehensive tenderness, that I exulted in my success.

Sir William, who imagined, I suppose, that he had made a conquest, addressed to me a superfluity of compliments, but I could

no

no longer trifle with Sir John's uneasiness. I asked him if he chose to sit on the front seat, and made room for him. His eyes sparkled with that tender joy which used to animate them, when he professed himself my lover. I endeavoured to convince him by my behaviour, that my heart was firmly attached to him; but as the formidable Sir William still fluttered about me, he did not resume his usual cheerfulness that evening.

Yesterday he attended me to a private concert: Sir William Burroughs happened to be present, who spoke to me with such a confident air, that I was convinced I had been guilty of great imprudence. I shunned him with the utmost care; but finding he persisted in pursuing me with hateful professions of love, (Oh! how am I fallen from the dignity of virtue!) I pretended illness, and begged of Sir John to see me home; he complied, with an eagerness that expressed his dislike of Sir William's assiduities.

Since

Since this affair, my husband has treated me with the most engaging tenderness; but my heart so accuses me for encouraging this coxcomb, and sporting with my husband's anxiety, that his present behaviour afflicts me more than his late unkindness.—Alas! madam, to what do I owe his present attachment? He is not recalled by the love of virtue; he is uninfluenced by the dictates of religion; I am not the object of his esteem, but the inspirer of a mere transient passion. He fears to lose me, yet perhaps, vanity rather than love causes his jealousy; and when his fears subside, his indifference will return. But whatever happens, I am determined to preserve a steady adherence to my duty.

If any change appear in my husband, I will acquaint you with it. Will a sincere contrition for my offence entitle me to hope forgiveness? Be assured I feel the most lively penitence! Ah! madam, restore to me your good opinion, without which I have an ad-

ditional reason to subscribe myself, my dear,
honoured parent,

Your unhappy daughter,

FLAVIA RAYMOND.

LETTER LXXIV.

Sir JOHN RAYMOND to GEORGE
RANTLEY, Esq.

SO you attribute my silence to some new
amour.—Faith, George, there has been
something novel in my late attachment.
Can you believe it? My wife has been the
cause of my neglecting to write. Despairing,
I suppose, of the success of any other means,
she attempted to regain my heart by exciting
my jealousy. Her plot succeeded, the gud-
geon was terribly wounded by the hook.
My vanity was piqued, and I really believe
some sparks of love were rekindled. She
perceived it, and for a time enjoyed my un-
easiness. But her natural sweetness soon in-
fluenced

fluenced her to confer my peace to every other consideration. For a few days she possessed my undivided attention, but security again produced indifference; and, to confess a truth to you, I now am unfaithful with less compunction than ever, for my wife is degraded in my esteem. I will tell you how I reconcile the matter to myself: Lady Raymond in this trial of her power must assume the appearance of a coquet, and encourage the address of men of gallantry. Is this the part of rigid virtue? Can she afterwards repel their attacks? Experience teaches me the whole force of this argument.—Therefore, if the end be laudable, the means were erroneous. She was also actuated by a lurking vanity, a dependence on her own charms, which I did not think her capable of. I have heard many good women say, Oh! if their husbands were unfaithful they would make them endure the torments they occasioned. And so the dear creatures, most

of them to gratify revenge, a few to secure their husband's constancy, render themselves unworthy of their esteem and affection. No wife has a chance of her husband's regard, who does not endeavour to excel in every good quality ; for as to mere beauty, it is only inoffensive in a wife. Where men have good dispositions, I *have* know them overcome fashionable follies, and become very much attached to their wives if really amiable. But these examples are very rare. As to my wife, I do not believe she indulged a spirit of revenge ; but I think that if she imagined it necessary to revive my love by jealousy, she must have determined to preserve this flame by adding fresh fuel. Oh ! prudence, what a dupe wert thou in this affair. I saw my wife condemned her own conduct even before I shewed its inefficacy by my behaviour. I *do* feel some pity for her, and yet I can't help rejoicing, that she is not wholly faultless. Her errors seem to justify mine. I did once
think

think, George, of following the example of a royal pair, but it is not sufficiently fashionable to conquer an habitual inconstancy. The wife of a libertine should be particularly attentive to the preservation of her character. Her situation is more dangerous, and her husband expects her to be more free from faults than any. We will not debate how reasonable the expectation is.—It is sufficient for me, and ought to be for the ladies, that it is universally expected. Adieu, George.

I am, your's, &c.

J. RAYMOND.

L E T T E R LXXV.

Lady MAYNWARING to Sir RICHARD
MAYNWARING.

DON'T expect to be address'd in the tender dialect. I make no professions.—I hate the very name of love—I entirely give up the prophetic art. Sir John Ray-

M 3

mond

mond is an odious fellow. I detest him. Recollecting I had not seen Lady Raymond for more than a fortnight, I this morning walked up to her house, and introduced myself without form. She was at breakfast alone in her dressing room. Her looks were pale and emaciated. Well, my dear, said I, where is your spouse? I have not seen Sir John, answered she, since yesterday morning; and to confess the truth, I am very uneasy on that account.—But he told you, without doubt, of his engagement, and then you should conquer all uneasiness for a short absence. You don't expect, nor I hope, *desire*, he should always be with you. Sir Richard has left me for a whole fortnight. I love the good man, but I am perfectly easy without him.

Indeed, Lady Maynwaring, replied my friend, though Sir John's company is always agreeable to me, yet I am not so unreasonable as to wish he should give up any amusement.

But

But he leaves me without imparting his design; surely this is unkind.

Whilst we were talking, Sir John came in. Good morning to you, Lady Maynwaring, said he; this is an unusual favour. What are you still a widow? But you are one of the gay world. You are not a domestic animal—He did not pay the least attention to his lady, who I saw was affected. She tried to disperse a tear, and reached out her hand, My dear, said she, with great emotion, you neglect your poor Flavia. Pho! prithee, Lady Raymond, said he, in an authoritative tone, and throwing himself into a distant chair, it is time to give over these fooleries.—You was at Lady Newport's rout last night. Is not Miss Newport a divine creature, madam? to me.

The wretch shocked me. He appeared entirely indifferent from his former self. He saw his lady's uneasiness, but saw it without disturbance. Oh! if he had been *my* husband,

how I would have tyrannized in my turn! —He added, Will your ladyship permit me to escort you to the play this evening?—If Lady Raymond chuses to go, Sir, said I, it will give me pleasure to accompany *her*. My heart disdained the fellow. He looked confounded, and I continued:—As little of the domestic animal as you think me, Sir, I seldom go to public places without my husband. But then, indeed, he is no Bashaw. He is neither apishly fond, nor fashionably ashamed of his wife.

Sir John appeared still more disconcerted, when luckily for him, some ladies entered, and gave a turn to the conversation. They were Court-belles, who came only to coquet with the husband, and to insult the wife by exciting her jealousy. One young flirt was so horridly provoking, that I could not help correcting her. She was talking of the *two youngest* Mr S—'s. Pray, Miss, said I, which is the *youngest* of the two? Mr. Edmund, she believed

believed. Then I presumed Mr. John was *not* the *youngest*. The girl looked like a simpleton, but soon recovered, and began to *re-ogle* Sir John. She even attempted to be witty; but I once more silenced, and made her pout by telling her, her wit seem'd rather *out of humour*. I was in hopes her volubility would have revived no more, but it soon broke forth again. She praised a most egregious fop. He was a sweet fellow, had a most bewitching taste in dress, was not only lively but sensible. She thought Miss B— a happy creature to attract his notice. I never heard before, said I, of Mr. L——'s sense; but I believe Miss B— will soon *make him sensible* that she despises a fop and a coxcomb.

Oh! she was astonished at my want of taste. Truly, Miss, said I, my taste is too refin'd to relish such a mess of insipidity, affectation and folly; whether cover'd by a scarlet coat, or a *tissue petticoat*, they are equally my aversion.

This

This hint could not be mistaken. The girl was abashed into silence, but her countenance glowed with malice and resentment. Sir John too was humbled into diffidence. The ladies were tired with his taciturnity, and soon took leave. He escorted them to the coach, and returned no more.

Lady Raymond attempted to calm her own uneasiness, and to excuse her husband, by indulging an imagination that something abroad had disturbed him, which he concealed from tenderness. I was too *prudent* to destroy her hopes, but I saw it was some subtle demon *at home in his own breast* that haunted him. I left Lady Raymond rather more easy.

Upon my word, Sir Richard, your merit upon comparison rises to the *highest degree* in the *barometer* of my opinion; you must endeavour not to fall down to *changeable*.

This Raymond was one of the *passionate lovers*. "Oh! he could never be happy till
" Miss

“Miss Villars was his wife. ’Twas mere
 “existence, not life, without her.” We are
 apt to think love professions as true as gos-
 pel, when alas! they are in general merely
apocryphal. Sir John was smitten with a fine
 form which “soon grew familiar”—*You*
 were violently enamoured with my face,
 shape and graces, and yet we are tolerably
 happy. We live a kind of—“as it were”—
yawnish, very frequently, but never quarrel-
 some. But you admired my liveliness, and
 pray do me the justice to own I am still *very*
entertaining. We taste none of the exquisite
 delights of refined lovers, but then we escape
 their painful sensibilities. I would not ex-
 change situations with any person. There’s
 for you, Sir Richard. Only continue as
 good as you are now, and I shall find no
 difficulty in remaining

Your dutiful and affectionate wife,

ANNE MAYNWARING.

P. S. I shan't be sorry to see you at home again.

L E T T E R LXXVI.

Lady RAYMOND to Mrs. VILLARS.

I PROMISED to write to my dear mother if any change appeared in Sir John: A change there is indeed, but my sufferings are now deserved. Good God! that an husband should be the inflictor!

Sir William Burroughs soon perceived that I despised him, and ceased to follow me. My husband, relieved from farther apprehensions, has relapsed into his former indifference; but I have deprived myself of the right of complaint! Yet it was not vanity, it was not malice, revenge, nor contempt, that incited me, as my behaviour afterwards might have convinced him. It was the hope of reviving his tenderness. Alas! he felt for me a passion too impetuous to be permanent,
and

and his late appearance of affection was, as I feared, only the effect of an alarmed vanity. My misfortunes have taught me to examine the motives of my actions. Ambition first pleaded Sir John's cause; a passion too foreign from my natural disposition to be lasting. His assiduous tenderness, the sincerity of his attachment, which was apparent from the superiority of his rank and fortune; the agreeableness of his person, all conspired in his favour, and I surrendered my heart to a second intruder; my love was less violent, but more rational than my first inclination. The thoughts of parting from you, allayed the happiness of an union, which seemed to be cemented by mutual affection. You know the rest. I have only to add a request, that I may receive an answer immediately. Perhaps your wisdom may propose some method of alleviating the distress of

Your dutiful and affectionate,

tho' distressed daughter,

FLAVIA RAYMOND.

LETTER LXXVII.

Mrs. VILLARS to Lady RAYMOND.

MY DEAR DAUGHTER,

YOU blame your late inadvertence with so much severity, that though I must disapprove, I cannot condemn. Endeavour to conquer the melancholy that now oppresses you, and try to convince sir John, that however mistaken you were in the means, the end proposed was the recovery of his affections. It is certain, that a woman whose husband is known to be gay, and to behave to her with indifference, cannot be too circumspect in her conduct to the men, lest she encourage an improper address. Sir John, conscious he had not behaved to you in a manner due to your merit, was alarmed at the distinction with which you treated sir William Burroughs. It is most probable his love revived with his fears, for I really think
 vanity

vanity had the least share in his emotions. I must confess, he does not seem to be actuated by those refined sentiments which are the support of the tender passion; but if you persevere in your attempts to please, you will implant in his breast the seeds of virtue, and be rewarded with the fruits.

Your expectations of matrimonial felicity were not derived from your general observations on life. You formed an idea of mankind from that pattern of consummate excellence, your dear father; but I believe I may truly say, "I ne'er shall look upon his like again."—All conditions when established in virtue are consistent with *human* happiness; but none are free from natural evils, lest we forget that we are only probationers for eternity. Remember, my dear, that human nature is "made perfect through sufferings," and that a superior degree of bliss will be the reward of superior virtue.--To condemn a fickle lover is meritorious, but to reclaim an unfaithf

faithful husband is an exalted proof of virtue.—Your prudent deportment to the men, will soon be an assurance to sir John of your just claim to his esteem. Your assiduous, unremitted endeavour to oblige him, cannot escape his observation, nor be observed without exciting a passion more tender than gratitude.—Take comfort then, my dear Flavia; I applaud your determination of acting in a strict conformity with your duty. Be assured, that if it be even possible (which I cannot suspect) for your husband to remain insensible to the united efforts of virtue, sweetness and beauty, you will preserve that delightful self-approbation, for the loss of which nothing can be offered as an equivalent.

Your brother and sister will be in town a few hours after this letter, having received intelligence that Mr. Leicester is dangerously ill. I hope their presence will enliven your spirits, and have a salutary

tary effect upon your health. Do not make a confidant of either. Your duty requires from you the preservation of your husband's honour.

If you give me a pleasing information of yourself, perhaps I may congratulate in person your recovered serenity.

I am, my dearest child,
 your ever affectionate mother,
 and truly sympathizing friend,
 SOPHIA VILLARS.

L E T T E R LXXVIII.

Lady EGERTON to Mrs. VILLARS.

MY DEAR FRIEND!

I Feel a concern equal to my affection for you, at the thought of wounding your peace; and I would not be the intelligencer of unwelcome tidings, if I did not believe that the means of redress are in your power only. Alas, madam, lady Raymond is not

happy ! Sir John is not the man our wishes represented him. Her tears and altered looks gave me reason to think she had some latent cause of uneasiness, of which I am now convinced.

Yesterday having seen sir John pass my door in his chariot, I went to sit an hour with lady Raymond. I never send up my name, and as I went before the time of fashionable visits, I entered the dressing room without ceremony. My friend was not there. I met her woman on the stairs, who told me her lady was in her own chamber, and she believed would not like any company, for she had locked her door and would not admit *her*. I rapped gently, in hopes lady Raymond might wish to see an intimate friend, and on hearing my voice she unlocked the door. — She attempted to conceal her face, but her speech betrayed her. I ventured to press her to confide in me. She then turned on me her eyes, which were swelled and red, and

and the most agonizing distress was painted on her countenance. Her tears flowed afresh at my solicitations, but she remained silent. At last, wringing her hands with a distracted air, Oh ! do not ask me, said she, lest I increase by my own misconduct the weight of my misfortunes !——Your looks are a tacit confession, answered I ; sir John is certainly unfaithful.—To what indignities, exclaim'd the weeping sufferer, have I been subjected ! —My own woman has insulted me ! My husband has forsaken me ! I cannot conceal it.—My heart will break, if I deny it this transient relief.—But, oh ! all you can do, is only to pity me !

I used every argument my friendship suggested, to alleviate her affliction, but all were ineffectual.—Her eyes were covered with an handkerchief, and her sobs pierced my soul. The violence of her grief at length deprived her of the sense of suffering, and she sunk back in her chair. Alarmed at this

fight, I was going to summon her woman, but a moment's recollection made me alter my purpose. It was some time before she recovered: your letter was brought up soon after; I took it at the door not chusing lady Raymond should be seen. She snatched and kissed it eagerly. My brother and sister are coming to town to see Mr. Leicester, said she, and my mother gives me some reason to think she designs following them, but alas! upon conditions beyond my power. This information some weeks ago would have made me compleatly happy, but now I wish only to be released from life, and to spare my friends the pain of seeing my misery.—Then pausing—I have betrayed my husband! added she, my mother recommends to me secrecy, even to these dear relations, and I have betrayed my husband!—Mrs. Villars, said I, was fearful the knowledge of sir John's unkindness might occasion a quarrel between him and your brother, to the entire destruc-
tion

tion of the family's peace, but she does not extend the caution to me.—I then requested she would give her reasons for suspecting her husband. She told me, she had been convinced for some time that his heart was estranged from her, but had no suspicion of the object of his present attachment till that morning; when on giving her woman a gentle rebuke for repeated negligence, she answered in so insolent a manner as astonished, and even terrified her;—that she had scarcely power to bid her leave the room. The room-maid hearing lady Raymond's woman speak in an elevated tone, went into the chamber, and was surprised to find her lady the person spoken to, but dropt a hint, that it was no wonder Mrs. Jewson was so saucy, when she met with such encouragement. Lady Raymond hastily asked, from whom? and the maid answered, that to her certain knowledge, sir John and Mrs. Jewson met every day at a milliner's, for that she had watched

them. — The poor lady's narration was interrupted by sobs and tears. She concluded with telling me, she fell into fainting fits on hearing the maid's dreadful story:—That she was just recovered from one, and had dismissed the servant with injunctions of silence when I went up.

I staid the evening with lady Raymond, who continued extremely dejected. When I begged of her to apply to you for advice, she answered, her date of life would be so short, she sometimes thought of writing only a last adieu.—I will now lay down my pen, and not conclude my letter till to-morrow.

* * * * *

I am this moment returned from lady Raymond. I found her in bed, and knew by her looks, before she told me, that she had no rest last night.—Indeed, my dear Mrs. Villars, I must intreat your immediate presence: I tremble for the event: Lady Raymond is
certainly

certainly in danger, if sir John persists in his cruel neglect. Mr. Villars's love for his sister may engage him in a quarrel with her unkind husband. Come then, dearest madam, immediately. Do not think me impertinently officious. I have said more than I ought to so tender a parent; but be assured, my love for you, and this dear creature, occasions so lively a zeal. The happiness of your family is really essential to the completion of her's, who is,

Dear Mrs. Villars,

Your affectionately faithful,

E. EGERTON.

LETTER LXXIX.

Mr. VILLARS to Mrs. VILLARS:

Dear and honour'd MADAM.

HEAVEN be praised, I can give you a satisfactory account of my father's situation. We found his fever much abated last night on our arrival, and this day he has had

no

no return of it. I deferred till this morning a visit to my sister, when leaving my Isabella with her father, I took coach to sir John Raymond's. Even *your* fortitude, madam, will be shaken by my information; but, as I must beg you will follow us to town, it is necessary I should prepare you for a melancholy interview.

I asked if my sister was at home; the servant told me she was confined to her chamber by illness. You had informed me she was not quite well. Eager to see her, and thinking you had prepared her to expect me, I determined to go without ceremony to her dressing-room. I entered and found no person there; but as the door of her bed-chamber was open I softly stepped to it. Good God! madam, how impossible is it to express what I felt on seeing my sister! Astonishment and grief rendered me speechless, and I stood some minutes unobserved. She was laid upon a couch; her face was bathed in
tears,

tears, her air dejected, and every feature discomposed.

Sir John was lolling carelessly on the window seat, humming a tune; his eyes fixed on a young woman who stood by my sister, and who seemed quite insensible to the sadness of that dear object of my attention. I shall go down to my dressing-room, child, said he, casting a look of indifference on lady Raymond. I started on hearing him speak, and they then saw me. I ran to my sister and embraced her. She was too weak to support the emotion of joy, but fainted in my arms. The young person, whom I now recollected to be my sister's woman, took up a bottle of water with such composure, that I snatched it from her. For Heaven's sake, sir John, said I, what is the matter with this dear creature?—She has been in a low spirited way some time, answered he, a good deal confused; and she will not go into company as I would have her.

Whilst

Whilst I was employed in assisting the woman to recover my sister, sir John slipped down stairs; Lady Egerton came up soon after; she saw my uneasiness. Your sister, said she, is in a very weak condition. London does not agree with her, I believe. I hope Mrs. Villars will be here shortly, and prevail upon lady Raymond to accompany her into the country.

I was too much disordered to answer. My sister's condition pierced me to the soul. Her senses returned, when giving me a look of inexpressible anguish, Ah! brother, I am unable to enjoy your conversation, said she, faintly—I can scarcely speak—How does my dear sister?—Give me one embrace, and let me see you again when I am better.

I found she was not then desirous of detaining me, and clasping her to my breast, I begged she would endeavour to resume her usual serenity, which would soon re-establish her health.

On

On leaving her I stepped into fir John's dressing-room. He had put on his hat and sword to go out. His colour changed on seeing me. Surely, fir John, said I, my sister is in a dangerous state. Has she had any advice? Upon my soul, answered he, she is a little unaccountable. It is a nervous complaint. She is too much alone.—I shall see Doctor B—, he shall visit her.—He then called his man and told him he wanted his attendance. In a slight manner he bade me good-morrow, and ran down immediately.—His behaviour offends me. But my sister claims all my attention. Was Isabella in her weak condition, I should—Great God! the very thought almost distracts me! Yet fir John is unmoved by his wife's sufferings. I love my sister with more than fraternal affection, and am astonished at his indifference.

My

My best beloved is gone to lady Raymond. I will not close my letter till she comes home.

* * * * *

Mrs. Villars gives me a melancholy relation. If any thing can effect my sister's recovery, it will be your presence. Lady Egerton and my father request that you would favour them with your company, and consider their houses as your home; but I know your tendernefs will not permit you to leave my sister till she is better. I am, dearest madam, (with wishes you may find us all happier)

Your dutiful son,

FREDERICK VILLARS.

P.S. Accept our best respects.

L E T T E R LXXX.

Lady RAYMOND to Mrs. VILLARS.

Dearest, ever honoured MADAM,

FORGIVE the weakness of your daughter, who cannot deny herself the melancholy

choly consolation of taking a last farewell ! I shall give you pain in telling you the awful moment of my dissolution is very near. That perhaps before this letter reaches you I shall be no more ! But do not, madam, lament my death. Alas ! I was not formed for conjugal felicity. Born with a heart too tender, and indulged by your goodness in every wish, I expected the same ever-assiduous affection would actuate the husband of my choice. Delusive hope ! which unprepared me for the natural vicissitudes of the human disposition.

Any degree of tenderness in my husband inferior to my own, would have prevented my enjoying perfect happiness ; at least that refined delight, of which I had formed the most exalted ideas : but, indeed, madam, I *think* that though I might have suffered from a husband's want of equal sensibility, yet I could have conquered my uneasiness, and been reconciled to a constitutional inequality

ty of tenderness, whilst assured of his constant affection; but to think that sir John's infidelity destroys not only *my temporal*, but endangers *his eternal happiness*, what wife, who wishes her husband to become partaker of her future felicity, can with fortitude support the reflection?

When I had fixed my determination to become sir John Raymond's wife, I *sometimes* feared my want of merit would subject me to the misfortune I now experience; but this apprehension did not *dwell* upon my mind. A separation from you was my most poignant affliction. Sir John was displeased at my melancholy. Ah! could he fear that a tender, dutiful child, would make a less affectionate wife? No; his heart is incapable of a faithful attachment.—But whilst I accuse my husband, I forget to confess my own imprudence. I have made lady Egerton my confidant. Yet disobedience to you does not aggravate

vate my faults. I had disclosed the sad secret before I received your letter.—My woman, who is one cause of my sufferings, alarmed by guilt, acquainted sir John with her fears that I had complained to lady Egerton. He insulted me in Jewson's presence. Even my weak state of health did not excite his compassion. My brother surprized me in tears. What can he think?—Good God! what dreadful disturbance may I occasion! I am unable to support the horrid thought.

* * * * *

I was constrained to lay aside my pen for a few minutes. Your prudence, madam, can allay the vehemence of anger.—The unhappy disturber of your tranquillity, and the object of sir John's aversion, will soon cease to afflict *you* and disgust *him*.

Farewell! my ever honoured mother! Oh God! 'tis terrible to think that I shall see you no more in this world! yet 'tis best
best

best it should be so. Farewell! I will not add for ever, for we shall meet again in eternity!

LETTER LXXXI.

Lady EGERTON to Mrs. STAMFORD,

MY DEAR CHILD,

YOU desire me to be very particular in my information of the present state of Lady Raymond's health. I fear she has but few days to live. What a ravage has distress made in her fine frame! And in how short a time!

Mrs. Villars arrived in town this evening, and came directly to my house. Her looks gave me a faithful copy of her mind. She was speechless for several minutes, and I was incapable of breaking the awful silence.—At length, she uttered—My child! my child! Tears were my only answer, but she understood their meaning. I must see her, continued she, will you prepare her for an interview?—I will follow you.

I ordered

I ordered my coach immediately to lady Raymond's, and found her in better spirits than I had seen her for several days. After I had been seated a few minutes, I have written said she, a last farewell to my dear mother; but methinks I wish to see her once again. I have a thousand things to mention, which I could not write, and I would expire in her arms.

This was a good opportunity of disclosing my errand. Could you, answered I, support the sight of Mrs. Villars? Would not the joy be too much for you? Not at all, resumed she, eagerly; indeed I could bear it.—Perhaps, she is come.—Tell me truly, lady Egerton. You look as if you brought good news.

I ventured then to inform her, that Mrs. Villars was really in town, and I believed would be with her in a few moments. Lady Raymond's eyes sparkled with that intelligence which used to animate them; she lifted them to Heaven, and clasping

her hands, exclaimed in a joyful tone, I thank thee ! O my God ! Every wish is accomplished in this gracious permission.

I left her, and waited in the dining-room my friend's arrival. She soon appeared. I conducted her to lady Raymond's apartment. Mrs. Villars had collected all her fortitude, and appeared with such a dignity of sorrow, as commanded respectful admiration, even more than tender sympathy. Lady Raymond, with an emotion too powerful for her weakness, threw herself at her mother's feet. All the parent was then conspicuous in Mrs. Villars. She embraced her daughter with the utmost affection; then raising her, and gazing eagerly upon her, a visible discomposure took possession of her features. Lady Raymond had fallen into a fit. It is impossible for my pen to paint this scene. My heart was never so painfully agitated.

It was with difficulty we recovered the poor lady. My friend and I helped her

to bed, from whence I fear she will never rise again.—She fixed her eyes stedfastly on her mother, and held her hand to her lips, but could not speak for some time. When she had regained strength, *Will you stay with me, madam?* said she: Will you render me the last kind offices? Mrs. Villars could not answer. We sat down on the bed-side, and lady Raymond sunk insensibly into a gentle slumber. My friend expressed a desire of knowing whether sir John was at home; I told her that neither he nor Mrs. Jewson had been seen for some days. She determined not to leave her daughter's house; but, as she was fatigued with her journey, I insisted on her going to bed, and promised to stay with lady Raymond till my usual bed time, when my woman should come and sit up with her. Mrs. Villars sent a line to her son, requesting to see him and his lady to-morrow morning.

* * * * *

Lady Raymond had a tolerable night. Mr. and Mrs. Villars have been here, and promise to return again in the afternoon.

* * * * *

I have been present at an interesting conversation. Lady Raymond called us to her bed-side after breakfast. My dear mother, said she, in a faint, but articulate voice, answer without reserve the question I am going to ask you. Was I not blameable in disclosing even to you, my husband's unkindness? It is of consequence to my peace, that you should be perfectly ingenuous.

I will be so, my dearest Flavia, replied Mrs. Villars. Your information certainly lessen'd my good opinion of sir John; and it is the duty of a wife to place her husband's actions in the most advantageous light. There are faults in a husband, by which a wife *ought not* to be the sufferer, but none which can justify her for rendering him an object of contempt. Persons in your unhap-

py

py situation are generally too apt to seek the consolation of pity, rather than the proper means of redress. *You*, my dear, were influenced by a desire of reclaiming your husband; but instead of consulting your own reason, and imploring the assistance of the Almighty, you complained to me, and abandoned yourself to despair. I know, my beloved child, that your trial was severe, and I am convinced very few have been equal to such a one. I do not condemn, but pity the weakness of human nature, which finds it difficult to act in this case without precipitation. The occasion requires a dispassionate manner of thinking, of which few are capable. It was my duty to give you the advice you solicited, and I now make it my request, that you will endeavour to recover your health. We will then consider on the means of regaining, and fixing your husband's affections. Try to live, my dear daughter, and we shall all be happy.

It is in vain, answered lady Raymond,— it is impossible. And oh! madam, I must confess, tho' with conscious shame, that my love for my husband is weaken'd by his unkindness. Am I not criminal? No, my dear child, cried the affectionate parent, no, you are not criminal. If your heart feels less of the tender sentiment for your husband, I know it is still anxious for his eternal happiness. Do not consider him as a votary of pleasure, but think you behold him a prey to the most fatal intoxication, or imagine you see him wounded by the most poignant stings of remorse; then, though your love be really diminished, your pity will be increased. Your resentment will subside, you will extend your forgiveness, and—Ah! madam, interrupted lady Raymond, did I say I loved him less? I deceived myself and you. He is as dear to me as ever. Oh! that I could clasp him to my heart! But he shuns me, he distrusts—he despises me!

She

She fell back in her bed, overcome by the agitations of her mind. Mrs. Villars and I supported her. Strong convulsions seized her, and have left her extremely weakened. She promised to try if she could sleep, and I employed the time in writing to you.

* * * * *

What accumulated misery may this vile sir John occasion! Mr. Villars sent for us down into the dining-room. My woman had attended lady Raymond since the flight of her own, and was left with her while we complied with the summons. We found Mr. Villars walking about the room. His looks were disordered, and expressed indignation blended with despair. As soon as we entered, Sir John's behaviour, madam, said he, to my friend, must give you at least as much uneasiness as it does me. His absence, his late indifference to my sister and me, shocked and incensed me; but I am now almost mad with rage. I have seen lord B—— : he

has taken into keeping a woman who was my sister's servant, and he told me this afternoon, she had been mistress to my brother, but had deserted him. He added, he supposed this affair had occasioned my sister's illness, that he wondered she should regard so common a matter; and concluded with a laugh, that he was sure I should not betray his mistress to her old lover, tho' if I did, he would be her protector. I had too much contempt for lord B—— to throw away any advice upon him, and indeed he turned from me too suddenly to admit of my reply.

Judge, madam, by your own emotions, what I felt, and still feel! Shall I not search out this mean wretch, confront him with his guilt, and expose him to the whole world? He shall be known to be a villain. Lady Egerton, to you I have no reserve.

Mrs. Villars sat with her eyes fixed upon the ground. A gloomy thoughtfulness overspread her brow. Her son's impatience
again

again broke forth. I wish from my soul, cried he, that *my* arm could revenge my sister's wrongs. — Mrs. Villars started. For heaven's sake, said she, retract this wild wish. What! could you desert a wife and unborn infant? Would you hazard your life in a guilty enterprize? Would you violate the laws of christianity by indulging a criminal revenge? Would you increase your sister's misfortune, by becoming her husband's murderer?—Oh! my son, let me beg of you to reflect, that though he is the cause of my daughter's sufferings, yet this wretched man whom you would devote to destruction, is enslaved by the most deplorable ignorance. I grant, that this ignorance renders him liable to punishment; but since human laws have appointed none for this error, leave him to divine justice. Remember who hath said, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay." — Sir John is rather the object of pity than resentment. Think for a few moments on the
cruelty

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cruelty of wishing to consign him to eternal misery.—She paused a while, then resumed : You would expose to infamy the man to whom your sister has vowed love and obedience, and perhaps by this means would prevent his re-establishment in the path of duty. To what fatal rashness might he have recourse to be removed from the scandal of public ignominy ! You would perhaps be accountable to heaven for abridging his date of life, tho' not the immediate instrument of his destruction.--Lady Raymond, though the injured sufferer, still retains a sincere and tender affection for her husband, and his infidelity will not release her from an observance of her vows.—Let us, my son, attend at present wholly to the recovery of your sister's health, and when that is restored, it is our duty calmly to consider on the most eligible method of reclaiming sir John, or to deliberate on the proper means of a final separation. —We will leave you to reflect on what I have

have urged, and I hope reason will entirely subdue passion.

As we found lady Raymond asleep, I took up my pen to give you this recital.

* * * * *

Reason *has* prevailed. Mr. Villars, on our return, eagerly seized his mother's hand: You are indeed, said he, my guardian angel. My heart recalls its dreadful wish, and tho' it bleeds for my sister's wrongs, yet I will commit her cause to Heaven, who in its own time will punish perjury and ingratitude. Mrs. Villars embraced him with a transport too exquisite to find adequate words. At the instant my woman came down, and told us lady Raymond was awake, that she found herself better, and intreated to see us all, for she knew her brother was below. My friend could only utter, Oh ! God ! if it be thy will, preserve her to us !

* * * * *

Mr.

Mr. Villars, on finding his sister better, was impatient to bring hither his lady. Soon after he had left us for that purpose, Mrs. Villars was called down. She had left us near half an hour, when I was sent for. I was never more surprized than when, on entering the dining-room, I saw sir John kneeling at my friend's feet. No, madam, said he, I will not rise till you pardon, and promise to permit me to see my injured wife. Plead for me, dear Lady Egerton. Mrs. Villars's cheeks were suffused with a crimson glow. You distress me, sir John, said she; I *do* pardon you, but I am fearful your presence should have a fatal effect on my daughter. Alas! if you are really sincere (and God only can know the secrets of the heart) how will you be affected! In all human probability, a few days are all she has to live.

Sir John appeared much affected. Surely cried he, I have been in a delirium! but let me instantly see the dear sufferer. He then arose

arose and went towards the door. Mrs. Villars stopt him; For my child's sake, exclaimed she, let me first prepare her. Lady Egerton, be so good as to stay with sir John till I return,

When we were alone, his confusion increased, yet did not prevent him from condemning his past conduct. I could not forbear telling him, I hoped his future good behaviour would recompence his lady's sufferings, if—I added, her life was granted to our prayers. I saw he expected to find her less dangerously ill than we gave him reason to hope; and I did not say any thing to alter his opinion, in hopes his remorse would be heightened on seeing her, and tend to confirm his better resolutions.

Mrs. Villars returned. Though I cannot deny your request, sir John, said she, I am afraid of bad consequences from indulging it. You must not stay long with her, nor permit her to talk much.

Sir

Sir John's impatience scarcely suffered him to attend to Mrs. Villars. We followed, and entered the apartment with him. Lady Raymond sat up in her bed, supported by pillows. Sir John was visibly shocked on seeing her. He threw himself on his knees by the bed-side, and kissing her hand, which she extended to him, Can you pardon the injurious treatment you have received ? said he, tenderly.

Oh ! my husband, answered the sweet creature, throwing her arms round his neck, do I live to see you once again ? Mrs. Villars, apprehensive this effusion of delight might overcome her daughter's spirits, and yet unwilling to disturb their happiness, stood gazing on them in anxious silence. They remained several minutes in this situation, till lady Raymond, in a weak voice, cried out, 'Tis too much for me !—Then, withdrawing her arms, her head reclined, and she fainted. Mrs. Villars flew to her assistance, and

and entreated fir John to accompany me down stairs. His affliction deeply affected me. He leaned his head upon his hand, and his sobs were audible.

* * * * *

Mrs. Villars came to inform us that lady Raymond was recovered from her swoon, and that she had received a note from her son, to excuse his return till the next morning, on account of an engagement with a fellow collegian who left town that night. He desired a particular information of his sister by the servant, and Mrs. Villars is retired to write. There is a pleasing alteration in lady Raymond's looks; but her tender parent, to prevent any farther discomposure, has insisted on her not talking. Young Mrs. Villars is here and shares our joy.

* * * * *

Lady Raymond is better. My friend's hopes of her child's recovery are expressed in lively terms in the following little billet.

My

MY DEAR SON,

We now indulge a joyful expectation of my beloved Flavia's re-established health; and a circumstance that has happened since I saw you, tends to promote our wishes for her lengthened life, as we have now reason to hope, that she will enjoy with added years, a large share of temporal happiness. My daughter Villars is with us, and joins her request with mine, that we may, if possible, see you here this evening. I want to give an explanation of the enigma, my note will contain. Your sister's recovery, and your compliance with a request I shall make to you, will confirm the happiness of

Your and her tenderly affectionate mother,

SOPHIA VILLARS.



What cannot Mrs. Villars's consummate wisdom effect! She has reconciled the two brothers. Indeed, sir John's penitence entitles him to Mr. Villars's forgiveness.

Lady Raymond has sat up a quarter of an hour. She is now disposed for sleep, and we have left her for the night. At this delightful juncture I will conclude my letter. I shall write another to-morrow, when I hope to confirm the satisfaction this will excite.

I am, with love to your worthy husband,
Your ever affectionate mother,

E. EGERTON.

L E T T E R LXXXII.

Lady EGERTON to Mrs. STAMFORD.

O H! my dear, how weak are the foundations of human happiness! Lady Raymond is much worse. Doctor W——'s looks alarm me. From the most flattering

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hopes

hopes of her life, we are now sunk in the deepest anxiety, and endeavour only to prepare ourselves for her hourly-expected death.

After I had sealed up and sent away my letter, my woman came running to tell me that lady Raymond's joy, on seeing so perfect a reconciliation between her husband and brother, prevented her taking any rest for sometime, and that the affecting scenes she had shared that day were too much for her. That she had talked very wildly, and her fever seemed to be returned. She was then in a slumber, but started frequently, and appeared greatly disordered. Mrs. Villars came in while my woman was with me, and guessed by our looks that lady Raymond was not so well as when we left her. I owned it. We went to her apartment, and were convinced she was very bad. Dr. W—— was summoned. He shook his head and gave us no hopes. She awaked extremely delirious, and knew none of us. Sir John
is

is almost distracted. Even my friend indulges a most poignant affliction. I never saw her so much affected.—But no wonder, when such a change succeeds to the most enlivening hopes.

Mr. Villars is just gone up. He came without his lady, being eager to see lady Raymond. As I was the only person below in the dining-room, I was obliged to disclose to him the melancholy alteration. I cannot describe his distress.

* * * * *

Gracious God! Lady Raymond is dying! She is in violent convulsions!

* * * * *

Her senses are returned, but Doctor W— assures us she can live only a few minutes. She is speechless. She has embraced us all.—Her husband and brother are kneeling by the bed-side, holding each a hand. (My friend supports her daughter's head.) Their eyes are frequently fixed on each other,

and their language is inexpressibly affecting.

* * * * *

All is over! ——— Lady Raymond has breathed her last! ———

I can only add, I am

Your's affectionately,

E. EGERTON.

LETTER LXXXIII.

Lady EGERTON to Mrs. STAMFORD.

MY DEAR CHILD,

I Now resume my melancholy recital. Mrs. Villars, who received her daughter's last looks, sunk upon the bed in a state of insensibility. When she revived we left the room. Our grief has yet been only expressed by sighs and tears. No one has disturbed the awful silence.

* * * * *

Lady Raymond it seems had always expressed a desire of being buried near her father,

ther, and sir John has consented to it. To-morrow morning he and Mr. Villars are to set out to attend the corpse. My friend, who is very much indisposed, has promised to be with me; but she will not leave the house till her daughter's remains are deposited in the hearse, when she will remove in a chair.

Young Mrs. Villars deplores her sister's death with genuine proofs of friendship. As to my friend, not one murmur of her's has arraigned the goodness of Providence. She mourns with the resignation of a true Christian. She has all the reality without affecting the parade of affliction. She feels all the tenderness without the extravagance of sorrow. She frequently visits the breathless clay, but the sight of it does not betray her into any vehemence of anguish. Sir John, Mr. Villars and I accompany her. It is a most pleasing corpse. A sweet serenity overspreads the features. She looks as if only in
a gentle

a gentle slumber. We do not permit young Mrs. Villars to see her sister on account of her own condition.

* * * * *

The corpse is placed in its last awful receptacle, and Mrs. Villars has given it the last embrace.—The hearse is now at the door.—The two gentlemen propose being with us again on Monday.

* * * * *

The melancholy equipage is departed, and my friend is preparing to leave this house. She is really very ill — Young Mrs. Villars has obtained permission from her father to attend her mother-in-law.

* * * * *

Hanover-square.

Mrs. Villars on her arrival was obliged to go to bed. She is very feverish, and Doctor W—— has prescribed bleeding. I will not finish my letter yet, as I hope to give you a more pleasing information to-morrow.

Sunday

* * * * *

Sunday.

I have not been able to write till now. My dear friend has been dangerously ill, and we were terribly alarmed, but thanks to Providence, her fever has left her, and she has only to recruit her strength. Young Mrs. Villars insisted on sitting up with her, and has shewn such assiduous tenderness, that I hope she will greatly contribute to restore her mother's tranquillity. My friend said yesterday, when her daughter-in-law offered her something to take, Come, my child! methinks my Flavia still lives in my Isabella!

* * * * *

Monday night.

The gentlemen are returned, and Mrs. Villars received them with that fortitude which distinguishes her from the rest of her sex. She has sat up all this day, and seems to have regained some degree of her usual serenity.

The remains of lady Raymond were deposited near her father, as she desired. The whole

whole village and neighbourhood attended the funeral, which was conducted with the utmost decency and propriety. A genuine concern for her death was universally expressed. The tender mother enquired into every particular; not, she said, to increase her affliction, but to admit some motive of consolation from an assurance that in these particulars her dear child's wishes had been fulfilled—When Mr. Villars told her how lady Raymond was lamented, I needed not these testimonies, said she, to convince me my Flavia was beloved. She was the joy of every heart, and she is happy. I do not repine, lady Egerton, my child is happy!

As young Mrs. Villars expects her lying-in will be in about two months, my friends determine to leave us within a fortnight.

I will no longer delay to send away my letter, for your impatience must have a mixture of inquietude.

I am, my dear child,

Your's most affectionately,

E. EGERTON.

LETTER LXXXIV.

Lady EGERTON to Mrs. STAMFORD.

I Can now inform you, my dear daughter, that Mrs. Villars has perfectly recovered her health, and *appears* always with a decent chearfulness. She frequently mentions lady Raymond, and without tears. She weeps when alone. As to sir John, he seems to be relapsing into irregularity. We see little of him. I hinted my fears to Mrs. Villars. She shook her head. I am afraid, lady Egerton, said she, you are not mistaken. My son gives me reason to think sir John is culpable.

* * * * *

I have an additional subject for admiration of my excellent friend! A letter was brought to her this morning, and she was told, that the bearer would call the next day for an answer. Mrs. Villars did not know the writing, but on glancing her eye over the contents she burst into tears, exclaiming, Poor guilty creature! what can I do for thee?

After

After an attentive perusal she gave me the letter. It was signed M. Jewson, and dated from the Marshalsea prison. These were the contents.

Honoured Madam,

My misfortune is too much the consequence of my guilt, to entitle me to your favour; you were deceived in my disposition. It was not love for lady Raymond, but for sir John's valet, that occasioned my desire of living with her. He deluded me. Sir John, soon after our arrival in town, made me proposals, which my vanity tempted me to accept. I became careless, and even insolent to my lady, whose mildness was not provoked. I triumphed in her declining health, for I had hopes sir John would raise me to her place; and as to my first lover, he had deserted me. But I need not be so particular. My lady gave me one day a deserved rebuke, at which I was so incensed that I vowed revenge.

venge. I told sir John she had exposed him; and he, being fearful Mr. Villars should discover to the world the injuries offered to his sister, left the house, taking me with him. I had attracted the notice of lord B——, and finding sir John was less prodigal than usual, I sent a note to lord B—— in his absence. He came immediately into my terms. I therefore abandoned sir John, and became mistress to my lord. His sudden death in a duel, occasioned by a dispute at cards, deprived me of all resource. I was turned out of doors by his sister. I took private lodgings, and was afraid of stirring out, lest my creditors should discover me. One of them actually arrested and threw me into this prison. The rest have brought in their claims. I have parted from every farthing, and disposed of every thing but the cloaths on my back. My debts still amount to 15*l*. I have had proposals from several gentlemen, which I have rejected, for I have had
time

time for reflection, and am truly penitent. I have applied to my father and mother; they have forgiven, but cannot assist me. My sister, who lives in Kent, has promised to procure me a place, and to take me down with her; but she has several children, and can do nothing towards my enlargement. She will consider me as one of her children 'till I am provided with a service, if I can obtain my liberty. May I, madam, presume to hope for your forgiveness and assistance? Will you advance the money for me? My poor father and mother deserve your goodness, and I will consider this instance of your bounty as done out of regard to them. For my own part, I can only plead the sincerity of my repentance to gain your mercy. Be assured, I will prefer beggary and imprisonment to farther infamy.

My sister will be the bearer of this, and call again to-morrow for your answer. Oh! madam, your pardon is necessary to my peace,
and

and the excellence of your character encourages my hopes that you will relieve the distresses of

The truly penitent,
and your ever devoted,
M. JEWSON.

Well, madam, said I, what will you do? Will you give any thing to a wretch who has occasioned the death of your daughter? —Ah! lady Egerton, answered Mrs. Villars, I acknowledge she has been criminal, but is she not a repentant sufferer? To God she is accountable for her guilt, and God is merciful to the contrite heart. I shall not support a criminal, but relieve a penitent. She has refused the wages of vice, and she has a right to the pecuniary advantages of virtue. Sir John contributed to her depravity, and would perhaps procure her release; but I would not expose either of them to so dangerous a trial.

I admired

I admired her in silence, for indeed I could not express my sentiments.

* * * * *

My friend has written an answer, which I begged leave to peruse, and have transcribed for you.

Mrs. Jewson,

I must acquiesce in your opinion, that your misfortune is a consequence of your fault. May you never experience any further punishment! My resentment ought not to continue longer than your guilt. Real penitence certainly restores you to divine favour, and will be supported by the assistance of the virtuous. 'Tis true, you have been the occasion of my affliction, but you have deceived and injured *yourself* more than me, and I most heartily forgive you. I will send the money you request, and add five guineas for cloaths, &c. to accommodate you for a new place.

place. Persevere in your virtuous purposes,
and Providence will protect you. I am,

Your sincere friend,

SOPHIA VILLARS.

If Jewson be not perfectly reformed after
this goodness I shall think her quite incorri-
gible. This is true charity! This is exalted
benevolence! Never did I hear of such a wo-
man as this!

* * * * *

I expect Mr. Leicester, Mrs. Griffin, and
the amiable pair, to spend this day with us.
How shall I part from this family. In losing
Mrs. Villars I shall more severely lament the
death of lady Raymond.

I believe I shall soon pay you and Mr.
Stamford a visit. I am impatient to see you
both, and to nurse the dear babe.

Believe me, my dear daughter,

Your's most affectionately,

E. EGERTON.

L E T T E R LXXXV.

Mrs. VILLARS to Sir JOHN RAYMOND.

DEAR SIR,

THE advice of an old woman may be deemed impertinent, but it cannot be termed self-interested, any otherwise than as it is the real interest of every person to perform what they think a duty.—It is not a mother anxious for the happiness of her child, who now exhorts you to support the character of a man of true honour. It is the friend solicitous to secure your present and future peace, who ventures to admonish, where perhaps she has ~~no~~ right to reprove. You are released from the conjugal ties, which enjoined a strict fidelity, and probably may imagine yourself to be at liberty to devote all your hours to pleasure; but consider, sir, can such indulgence be consistent with that divine law, which teaches us to love our neighbours as ourselves? If you are the betrayer of innocence,

nocence,

nocence, you are accountable to God for the violation of virtue, for destroying the peace of families, and perhaps for the future guilt and infamy of the deluded sufferers. Instead of supporting by your example, laws instituted for the public good, you act in defiance of them; and not only commit, but encourage guilt. You owe a strict conformity to human ordinances as a member of the community, and a steady adherence to divine precepts, as a professor of christianity.—I know there are an unhappy set of females, who are considered as the proper objects of passion. Who can then release *them* from the several duties they owe to God, their fellow creatures and themselves? Are *they* excluded from the benefits of the Christian dispensation? Does not *their* penitence entitle them to mercy, and are not those persons obnoxious to the divine vengeance, who contribute to perpetuate their crimes and misery?

I have urged some of the claims of duty. Permit me to mention another, the neglect of which, has frequently a more alarming, though not more destructive consequence. An attention to the preservation of health, of fortune, and of character, is not only essential to our true happiness, but to the enjoyment of pleasure. We must be rational beings, if we would protract our relish for amusements. The wise Author of our nature has made vice the parent of misery, and virtue a constant source of the most delightful sensations.

I cannot conclude without an apology for the liberty I have taken in offering my advice. Yet, sir, when you consider that friendship dictates to my pen, the motive will, I hope, plead in my favour. I shall exceedingly rejoice if my cautions are unnecessary: for be assured, sir, I am,

Your sincerely affectionate friend,
SOPHIA VILLARS;

L E T T E R LXXXVI.

Mrs. VILBARS to Lady EGERTON.

PERMIT me, dear madam, to offer my grateful acknowledgements for those uncommon instances of friendship, all my family have received from your ladyship. My heart is affected with a more lively sense of them than words can express.

My daughter-in-law (alas! that distinction is no longer necessary) was very little incommoded by the journey. She and my son desire you would accept their thanks, and most respectful compliments.

The first sight of this place revived melancholy ideas; yet, my dear lady Egerton, I do not wish to recall my child to this life. Sir John must probably would have relapsed into indifference. Heaven rewards her suffering virtue, and I am perfectly resigned to its dispensations.

My long absence from home increases my present avocations. To such a friend apologies for short letters are needless. I sincerely wish your ladyship a pleasant journey into Northamptonshire, and beg you would present our best respects to Mr. and Mrs. Stamford.

I am, dear madam,

Your faithful, affectionate,

and most obliged humble servant,

SOPHIA VILLARS.

LETTER LXXXVII. and last,

Mrs. VILLARS to Lady EGERTON.

DEAR MADAM,

AFTER suffering a dreadful anxiety, I am enabled, by the goodness of the Deity, to impart to your ladyship some degree of the joy we feel on my dear daughter Villars's safe delivery, and the additional blessing of a fine boy. Her resignation in the severest conflicts has endeared her to me, whilst my son's apprehensions and tender ex-
tacy

tacy have convinced me, his love is of an exalted and permanent nature. After enduring a restless uneasiness for a day and night (all which time she was thought to be in extreme danger) he received the information of her safety with equal transports of delight. I shall never forget the tenderness with which he clasped her to his breast. She returned the embrace, and looking at the innocent babe, seemed to claim for him a share of her husband's affection. Parental joy sparkled in his eyes. He gazed on the sweet infant, gently kissed it, and again, by eloquent caresses, thanked the partner of his heart for the dear present. Methought I saw my husband revived in my son. I shared their happiness, and though I dropt a tear in remembrance of my Flavia, my satisfaction was unimbittered by regret.

My daughter Villars's attentive observation of her little babe's actions, expresses all the mother's fondness. She has entered upon

the delightful office of nurse. Every feature is animated by an heightened conjugal affection, and her eyes glisten with maternal softness. My son is seldom absent from his Isabella. He reads, he converses on some pleasing subject, or he nurses the sweet object of his future joys and cares. Both my dear children support themselves on this summit of earthly felicity, with such pious gratitude, and equanimity of soul, as render them deserving of the blessings providence has bestowed on them.

I have not had a line from sir John Raymond; but Mr. Leicester informs us, that even in an incessant pursuit of pleasure, he is the most miserable of human beings. Poor infatuated man!—But whilst I lament his unhappy delusion, I am thankful for the appointment of Heaven in releasing my dear child from farther sufferings.

* * * * *

Good

Good God! what a letter have I received!
O madam, sir John Raymond is no more.
Read the inclosed, and join with me in compassion, and acquiescence to the will of Heaven.

MADAM,

“ I dare not address you by any epithet
“ expressive of the character you once permitted me to bear. My mind is a perfect
“ chaos of horror!—I am the wretched
“ victim of my own intemperance.—I am
“ mortally wounded in a duel fought in defence of the most worthless of her sex, after having injured the most amiable. I received aspersions which my conduct had
“ incurred; and, in a fit of frenzy, drew my
“ sword upon a fellow whom I expected to
“ have terrified by its appearance. But he
“ knew too well the character of his antagonist; and assisted by a wretch who dishonours the name of woman, in a moment
“ disarmed and wounded me.—Good God!

Q4

“ what

“ what an inconsistent creature is man ! To
 “ hazard the sacrifice of life in defence of
 “ the honour he has abused, and for the pre-
 “ servation of a character he has forfeited !
 “ But, alas ! these reflections are ill-timed—
 “ My surgeon assures me I can live but a
 “ very little time. Before this reaches you,
 “ I shall perhaps be arraigned at the awful
 “ tribunal of divine justice ?—Oh ! madam,
 “ can you forgive the author of your
 “ sufferings ? And will an equitable, and
 “ good God receive to his mercy the wretch
 “ who defied his justice ? Can I distin-
 “ guish the dread of punishment from the
 “ contrition of sincere penitence ? How
 “ shocking is uncertainty, when an eternity
 “ of happiness or misery is the alternative !
 “ May my example be a warning to the in-
 “ considerate many, never to delay the task
 “ of repentance ! I was apprehensive of pre-
 “ sent suffering, and have consigned myself
 “ —O God ! (how dreadful the thought) to

“ an

“everlasting state of misery!—I am on the
“brink of Eternity.—Farewel!—I fear for
“ever.—”

Oh! lady Egerton, what a deplorable catastrophe! Unhappy man! may his penitence be accepted at the throne of mercy! I forgive, I deplore the self-condemned martyr to his vices. His servant brought me a parcel, which contained his will. I find he had bequeathed to me the remains of his shattered fortune, as some compensation (he expressed it) for the sufferings he had occasioned to me and his injured wife. I burnt the will immediately, as I have lately discovered, that his nearest relation, and heir at law, is in very distressful circumstances, has a large family, and is a very valuable character.—Can I ever lament my daughter’s early death? Dear lady Egerton, how inscrutable are the ways of Providence! We can never religiously call any event an evil. If then we feel some of the afflictions incident to mortality, let us not only
remember

remember how little we deserve from the Deity (who yet corrects, like a kind parent, for our amendment) but also, that though we cannot command events, it is always in our power, from every event to derive some advantage.—I must for some time quit my pen.

* * * * *

I resume the pleasing subject. My son's tender and respectful assiduity to please me is increased, and my daughter is a counterpart of my deceased child. I must add, in justice to Mrs. Villars, that with lady Raymond's soft complacency of manners, she possesses that fortitude and dignity of soul, which perhaps would have supported *her* in the arduous trial to which my Flavia was unequal.—To convince you of my present serenity, I inclose an Ode to death which I finished this day. I wish the poetry was more adapted to the sublimity of the subject, but I submit it to your candour.

If, madam, the society of three tender parents, whose happiness is truly domestic, will

be

be pleasing to *you*, the sweets of your friendship will vary and heighten *our* delights. We claim the performance of your ladyship's promise to my daughter, of being a sponsor to her child, and hope Mr. and Mrs. Stamford will soon accompany you into Essex. If her dear babe is not too young for a traveller, little Frederick invites him to his nursery.

It is more than a week since I began this letter. My daughter and my grand-child delightfully divide my time. I acknowledge, and enjoy the bounties of heaven. Religion is the foundation of acquiescence and content. I consider that my Flavia has obtained an early admission into the regions of bliss; and whilst I anticipate with christian hope the joys of being partaker with her of endless felicity, I am animated in my endeavours to perform the duties of my present station.

Come, dear madam, and congratulate in person

Your truly affectionate, and ever grateful
SOPHIA VILLARS.

(Inclosed in the foregoing.)

AN ODE to DEATH.

I.

OH Death! whose arbitrary hand
No human power can e'er withstand,
I bend beneath thy rod!
And whilst I own thy shaft severe,
Whilst wounded nature drops a tear,
My soul! resign to God!

II.

No more each mind-expressive grace
Depicted on me Flavia's face
Shall charm a parent's sight;
When Death the tender frame invades,
How soon the roseate blossom fades,
And sinks beneath the blight!

III.

Greatness! the echo of a name!
On gales of popular acclaim,
What vot'ries fill thy shrine!
Rais'd to the zenith of their power,
They blaze the meteors of an hour,
Then fall, no more to shine!

IV.

IV.

Ah! see the mockery of state!
The last sad levee of the great!
The pageantry of death!
In sable pomp the victim lies,
A spectacle for vulgar eyes,
The sport of vulgar breath!

V,

Say, what avails the sculptur'd bust,
The honours paid to putrid dust,
The venal Poet's lays?
Virtue disdains the forms of art,
She lives in records of the heart,
Best monuments of praise!

VI.

Behold life's closing scene display'd,
How vain the gew-gaws of parade!
Th' appendages of wealth!
Art has exhausted all her power,
Can she revive the drooping flower?
Or tint the bloom of health?

VII.

What horrors fill the guilty mind,
(Whose joys with life must be resign'd)

When

238 THE EXEMPLARY MOTHER.

When Death's dread shaft is nigh !
Life flits away on flutt'ring wing,
'Tis Vice that arms the tyrant's sling,
Impels the heart-felt sigh.

VIII.

While the smooth stream of pleasure glides,
While life rolls on in rapid tides,
Hope gilds each rising morn !
Whilst every zephyr breathes perfumes,
Whilst every path with roses blooms,
We fear no latent thorn.

IX.

Adversity, with poignant dart,
By wounding, purifies the heart,
Expels each baleful weed ;
She prunes each wild luxuriant shoot,
Her scion bears the noble fruit
Of Virtues heavenly seed.

X.

My soul ! arrest each anxious thought :
Affliction's rigid school had taught
My Flavia's mind to fear ;
Taught her, superior to her fate,
With Faith's firm eye t' explore the state
Where pain shall be no more.

XI.

XI.

Shall *Stoicks* boast their mental art,
Shall they, O Death ! defy thy dart,
Repel each shaft of woe ?
And can the Christian want support ?
To him whose Saviour is his fort,
Is Death a dreaded foe ?

XII.

Though conscious virtue can dispense
A bliss beyond the joys of sense,
A genuine heart-felt glow ;
Yet know, fond man with pride elate,
Vain is thy vaunted happy state,
Whose bliss is fix'd below !

XIII.

If Death this vital spark destroys,
Ev'n virtue's self-rewarding joys
Are fleeting as our breath !
The *Christian* seeks a nobler prize,
The grave's his passport to the skies,
His triumph over Death !

F I N I S.

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